

WARNER'S SURPRISE

KENNETH
AND HUGH



C. D. BELL.



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Joseph William Cecil Higgs
From his Affectionate
Mother
July 25th 1878

KENNETH AND HUGH;

OR,

SELF-MASTERY.

Ballantyne Press
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EDINBURGH AND LONDON

Warne's Star Series.

KENNETH AND HUGH;

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SELF-MASTERY.

By CATHERINE D. BELL,

AUTHOR OF

"MARGARET CECIL," "HORACE AND MAY," "MARY ELLIOT,"

"HOPE CAMPBELL," "ELLA AND MARIAN," ETC.



New Edition.

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PREFACE.

“**C**OUSIN KATE” has in Kenneth and Hugh provided a delightful story for schoolboys. The temptations and trials incident to school life form the chief interest of the tale ; and its young readers may learn from brave Hugh’s candour and honesty, and from Kenneth’s youthful piety and fraternal love, how best to walk in the narrow way when they first leave the safe shelter of home.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE FIRST LETTER HOME, ...	I

CHAPTER II.

BIRKENHOLME, ...	5
------------------------	---

CHAPTER III.

AUNT JANE, ...	22
----------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

HUGH GAINS A LITTLE WISDOM, ...	40
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

GEORGE AND EDWARD, ...	56
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

OBEEDIENCE, ...	71
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.		PAGE
REBELLION, ...		90
CHAPTER VIII.		
A SCHOOL BROIL, ...		124
CHAPTER IX.		
DUTIES TO SCHOOL-FELLOWS, ...		134
CHAPTER X.		
FORGETFULNESS, ...		147
CHAPTER XI.		
REPENTANCE, ...		159
CHAPTER XII.		
HUGH LEARNS TO BE MASTER OF HIMSELF, ...		199
CHAPTER XIII.		
COURAGE <i>versus</i> FOOL-HARDINESS, ...		226
CHAPTER XIV.		
COURAGE VINDICATED, ...		242
CHAPTER XV.		
FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES, ...		285
CHAPTER XVI.		
GOOD OVERCOMING EVIL, ...		335



KENNETH AND HUGH.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST LETTER HOME.

QUEEN STREET, *September 23, 1833.*

MY DEAR GRANDMAMMA, — You know we promised to write to you to-night; and as Kenneth, the lazy fellow, has tumbled straight into bed, I must do it, although I am desperately sleepy.

We made out the journey very well. Please tell grandpapa that it was all right about the seats. As soon as we got to H—— I jumped down, as I was next the outside, and was running off to Mr B——'s, when the landlord came out of the inn and said that it was all right, and that Mr B—— had paid him. We got into a little difficulty at H——, and I am afraid grandpapa will think I did not do quite right. You know he gave

us each four shillings and sixpence, and bade us give the guard two shillings and sixpence, and the coachman two shillings, when we got to Edinburgh. But we found that both guard and coachman changed at H——, and that although we had only gone such a little way with them, they expected something. It was before I had got up to my seat again that the coachman came to ask me for money. I looked up to Kenneth to know what I should give ; but he was too busy happing a sick boy in his plaid, to attend to me, so I had to think for myself. It was not difficult, as I could not give them less than sixpence, and it would not be fair to the other coachman to give this one more out of my two shillings. But first I pulled one shilling out of my pocket, and then another, and the man standing looking on all the time, and holding out his hand. And when I was going to try again to find my sixpence, he grinned, and said, “ Oh, that is quite enough, young gentleman, two shillings will do nicely ; I ’m never hard on young gentlemen.” And I am afraid you will think me very silly ; but I did not like to say I never meant to give him so much, I did not like to disappoint him, and so—and so I gave him the two shillings ; and when the guard came up and saw his two shillings, I was obliged to give him the same. Kenneth said it was very silly ; and certainly he did much better. He gave the guard a shilling, and asked him to give sixpence of it to the coachman. And when the man said he should

not care to keep it all, Kenneth only laughed pleasantly, and said that *he* did not care to give him more than sixpence. And the man went away quite good-humouredly.

After I had been so silly, the next question was, What was I to do about the Edinburgh men? Kenneth agreed with me that if grandpapa thought two shillings and half-a-crown the fair thing for all the way, we could not give less than two shillings, and one shilling and sixpence from H——. So Kenneth lent me the three shillings. Generous fellow that he always is, he wanted to give them to me. But of course I was not going to agree to that, particularly as I knew he had not more than just enough to buy the paint-box like Patrick Fraser's, which he so much wishes to have. So please, grandmamma, will you ask grandpapa to lend me the three shillings, and he can keep it back out of my Christmas money.

I think that is all I have got to say. And I cannot write more to-night, I am so sleepy; and all the bustle, and the long journey, and the number of new faces have fairly bamboozled me, and obfuscated (two nice long words for Maurice to spell) all my senses. Kate and Lizzie wished to know what kind of people our new aunt, uncle, and cousins are. But they must wait till another day. It is too soon to judge. Only they are not at all to my taste. Oh, why could not we stay at dear Birkenholme? Or, if we must come to school, why did papa and mamma choose Uncle George for us to be with?

Why did they not let us go to Uncle John and Aunt Lucy? We know them, and like them. But as for Uncle George and Aunt Jane, who can possibly like them? And the cousins! Only fancy, the Hugh of this house is not content with dear grandpapa's good, honest name, but must be called Percival. And the Lizzie is Elizabeth; and a grand stately Queen Elizabeth she is. I am glad they don't call her Lizzie,—she is so very unlike our own good Liz, and so unlike you, dear grandmamma. And I am so glad that there is no Kate, for no daughter of Aunt Jane's could ever deserve to be called by our Kate's name. Aunt Jane condescended to ask after her name-child. Alas, poor Boy! I did not venture to tell her what you are always called, or to hint at the style of young lady you are. Fancy poor dear Boy the namesake of stately Aunt Jane. But now I must really stop; my eyes are gathering straws, as you used to say. Good-night all. Oh, why can't I say it with my tongue, and hear it with my ears, instead of writing it with this hateful pen? Kisses to all the bairns, and a thousand and one to darling Johnnie. Tell him he must not forget his "big boys;" and believe me, dear grandmamma, your affectionate grandson,

HUGH GRAHAME M'LEOD.

P.S.—You must not be unhappy about what I have said about uncle and aunt. They may be quite nice people after all. Please ask Jamie to remember to feed my hedgehog.



CHAPTER II.

BIRKENHOLME.

SUCH was Hugh's first letter home. And now, in order that you may more fully enter into the feelings and position of our schoolboys, I wish to show you the home they have left before I introduce you more particularly to the one to which they have come. Let us, therefore, pay a visit to Birkenholme this fine September day, the day on which the letter is expected.

The arrival of this letter is the grand event of the day to the elder children. And although the errand-boy who brings the letters from the post town never makes his appearance until nearly four o'clock, yet Lizzie, Kate, and Jamie set off immediately after luncheon to meet him, hoping thereby to get possession of the treasure at least half-an-hour sooner than they should otherwise do.

It was a beautiful quiet afternoon, and our little party started in better spirits than they had felt since the sad

good-byes had been spoken two mornings before. The absence of the "big boys" made a great blank to the whole household, and more particularly to the elder girls. Lizzie, Kenneth, Kate, and Hugh—for such was the order of seniority—were very near in age, scarcely a year between any of them, and before this time they had never been separated for even a day. Within the last two years, since the death of a brother next younger to him, Jamie had been admitted into the companionship of this elder branch of the family. But he was more than three years younger than Hugh, and could by no means make up to his sisters for the absence of the others. They felt it sorely, more even than they had expected. In spite of constitutional indolence, the gentle, unselfish Lizzie had exerted herself to conceal her own depression of spirits, and as much as possible to cheer the others. But the more impetuous Kate had given full way to her feelings, and had, by her determined melancholy, her avoidance of all wonted occupations, and her restless, aimless wanderings about the house and grounds, drawn down upon herself many a rebuke from the active, cheerful grandmother of Birkenholme.

On this day, however, Kate looked a different creature. Her whole mind was full of the letter she expected to receive; and, in the expectation of this pleasure, sorrow was for the time forgotten. She was unreasonably impatient to set out on their walk. Ready long before

Lizzie, she stood on the lawn fuming and fretting, and calling every minute up to the bedroom window to hasten the other's motions; and when they had started, she had constantly to check her quick steps, and turn back, or she would have got so far before Lizzie and Jamie as to be unable to join their conversation. And yet, dear impatient Kate, you have rather more than two hours in which to take a three-quarters-of-an-hour's walk.

A pleasant walk it was, independent of its pleasant object. Through the pretty old-fashioned garden, and past the poultry yard, with its good, comfortable, though unostentatious accommodation for grandmamma's far-famed poultry, and where not even the absorbing interest of the expected letter could hinder them from lingering to admire this or that peculiar pet, and to listen to the old henwife Peggie's lamentations over the absence of her "dear laddies." Then up the favourite hill parks, each of which has its peculiar advantage, its characteristic name. First the "Cow Park," with its gentle sunny slope, its thick plantations sheltering it from north and east blasts, and its pond, at one end shaded by fine old trees, where the cattle luxuriate in the hot weather. Beside it, and lying more fully to the sun, is what Kate has poetically called "Sunny Lea," but which is better known as the "Spring Park," where the grass begins to spring earlier in the year than in any field for miles round. Above these lies the "Hawthorn

Park," with its characteristic group of old hawthorns, famed in all the neighbourhood for their age, size, and beauty. Farther up still, the "Rocky-burn Park," down whose steep slope the little stream dashes, and foams with more noise and sparkle than one could fancy so tiny a body of water could make. The wood which crowns the hill might be supposed to begin here, as a broad plantation runs along the top of this field. But between the plantation and the real forest lies a wide, comparatively open space, called the Birken Brae, where the ground presents a most picturesque variety of rock and furze, interspersed with sunny spots of bright grass, and adorned with some magnificent specimens of birch-trees, standing alone in solitary beauty, or grouped in twos and threes all over the field. From the higher rocks are to be obtained fine views over the surrounding country, and down upon the old house, sunny gardens, and shrubberies of bonnie, bonnie Birkenholme. The burn is here too, with its little falls and pools, and there are numerous bird's nests and rabbit holes for young adventurers to seek out and watch; and altogether the Birken Brae is a spot which may well linger in the mind and heart of friends, and cause many a longing to our absent schoolboys in their town home.

At the top of the Birken Brae our party entered the wood, and turned into the cart-road which ran all through it, along the brow of the hill, and down its sloping shoulder, to where the wood met the high road

from —. It was at this meeting-place that they proposed to await the arrival of Robie, the post-carrier. But as they approached it, even Kate was obliged to confess that they were much too soon, and they began to move more loiteringly, and to pause occasionally to gather hazel nuts and acorns, or to watch the squirrels springing from tree to tree. In spite of all delays, they arrived at their resting-place soon after two, while three was the very earliest hour at which it was possible Robie could appear, and far earlier than was at all probable.

If they were to be kept long waiting, however, they could not well have found a prettier spot in which to wait. Behind them the wood, with its broad grassy road, here branching off in various directions, and opening up fine glades, with all that variety of light and shade which forms one of the great charms of woodland scenery. Before them, a wide expanse of gently undulating, highly cultivated, and well-wooded country, watered by a noble stream, and backed by a range of blue hills in the far distance. The day was exquisitely calm. Distant sounds, such as the lowing of cattle, barking of dogs, ploughmen speaking to their horses, came distinctly upon the ear, and mingled with the blithe song of the robin in the hedge by their side, the cooing of the wood-pigeon in the heart of the woods, and the chirrup of the squirrels in the trees overhead. A few frosty nights had loosened the leaves of the trees, and they came fluttering quietly down in the still air, looking like flocks of living crea-

tures, with their varied tints of green, yellow, orange, and brown, and their graceful, hovering motions. Below the trees, the long blades of grass still drooped under the large drops of melted hoar-frost ; but out in the sunshine the air felt balmy, and even hot, like a day in May or June.

There was a stile leading into the high road, and on the top step Kate seated herself, leaning back against the trunk of the noble elm whose branches shaded her from the sun. Lizzie found a more humble, but equally comfortable, seat, on a low stone at the foot of the brother or sister elm-tree opposite, and Jamie climbed up to a branch, from whence, as he knew by experience, he could see more than a mile along the road. This distant view would be productive of more information than might have been supposed ; for the children had given Robie a splendid scarlet flag, which he was directed to fasten to his walking-stick if there was a letter from Edinburgh.

The girls had brought books, wherewith to while away the time, if only they could get their minds settled to attend to them. And Jamie expected, from his elevated position, to spy out objects of amusement in the passers-by.

The first event which occurred was the arrival of their grandpapa, passing through the wood on his way to a distant part of his estate. He laughed heartily when he understood the object of their being there.

"Why, bairns," he said, "it is not long past two, and Robie never leaves —— before three."

"Oh, but he might possibly be earlier to-day," Kate said.

"Now, Kate, be reasonable. In all the three years you have lived here, did you ever know Robie bring the letters before half-past three?"

"No, grandpapa, perhaps not—I daresay not," unwillingly. "But still, you know, he may be earlier—it is quite possible. And, at any rate, it does no harm our waiting here."

"No harm, certainly; I like to see you anxious about the letter, so long as you don't ask me to wait with you."

"But, grandpapa," Kate said eagerly, "you will be home by half-past three at least, will you not?"

"Certainly not. I have too much to do to come home an hour before dinner time; and the letter can keep, Katie. It won't run away from me." And with a good-humoured nod he bade them good-bye, and rode on down a side path.

Kate looked after him, hurt and angry at his supposed indifference.

"It would have been different with papa," she said to herself, and she tried to get up a sentiment of their being neglected and little cared for in their parents' absence. But it would not do. Too many instances of her grandfather and grandmother's kindness and affection rose up

to reproach her for the thought, and, with a penitent blush at her own ingratitude, she was forced to give the matter up.

Grandpapa had left behind him a new source of amusement, a large stag-hound, called Grim, who generally divided his society equally between his old master and his young playmates, and who, having accompanied the former all morning, seemed to consider that strict impartiality required him to spend the afternoon with the latter. He had always been a favourite with the children, but was so now more than ever, from the unmistakable signs he had given of sorrow for the absence of the "big boys." He had really never seemed happy since they had gone away. He had several times been found at the back of their room door, begging, in his own way, for admittance. In Kate's many wanderings out, and in the house, at all hours, she had often found him standing upon the broad door-step, his ears pricked forward, his tail drooping, in the attitude of intense expectation. And he never entered the room where the family were seated, or met a party of them in their walks, without an eager snuffing, and looking all round, most plainly implying a hope that the absentees might be among them.

Before Grim had been quite enough made of and spoken to, before Kate and Jamie were satisfied that he quite understood about the expected letter, a new diversion appeared. The nursery party, under old

nurse's charge, came up one of the wood walks. First in the procession marched a remarkably small, shaggy, black pony, rejoicing in the name of Witch. By her side, and guiding her as much as her wilful majesty chose to be guided, walked Maurice, a fine handsome boy about six. On Witch's back was seated the spoilt beauty of the nursery, Julia, or Lady, or Duchess, or Queen, as she was generally called. To these was often added the name of Coquette. And that this last title was only too well deserved, might be seen at the first glance. Well did the little beauty know her own charms, and how best to show them off; and so much were her brothers amused with her airs and graces, that it required all grandmamma's prudence and decision to keep her from becoming really vain and affected. She looked so pretty coquetting about the kisses her brothers asked for, her head on one side, her deep violet eyes looking archly out from under their half-closed lids, her little mouth pursed up into an expression of coy propriety,—her affected motions and gestures were so full of grace, she was still so young, and so unconscious of the real nature of her feelings and conduct, that it was difficult to realise there could be danger in encouraging her airs and graces, and fostering her love of admiration.

Next to her came Johnnie, the baby of the family, attended by his faithful guardian old nurse. Johnnie was three years old. He had been born just before Colonel and Mrs M'Leod went out to India. If he had

been a strong child, they would have taken him with them; but he was so very small and weak, that they had been advised to leave him behind. He was now quite healthy; and although so slight, that he looked as if a breath of wind might blow him away, he was full of spirit and energy. He was the idol of the whole household,—one of those children who cannot well be anything but an idol, so fair and delicate-looking, so spirited, and yet so good and gentle, that no one could help loving him, no one could help fearing for him.

So soon as Johnnie came in sight, Kate sprang at one step to the ground, and catching him up in her arms, had carried him off to her elevated seat, before poor nurse had time even to think of what she was going to do, much less to remonstrate. Johnnie was so fearless, his elder brothers and sisters so rash, as nurse thought, that really her life was one scene of alarm for her darling's life and limbs.

Jamie had, in the meantime, taken possession of the beauty Julia; Maurice was fully engrossed with Grim; and for Lizzie, too slow to compete with Kate or Jamie, there remained only the little Jane, or Boy of Hugh's letter. The sturdy figure, short hair, somewhat gruff voice, and independent carriage, fully explained the meaning of her name of "Boy," by which she was oftener called than by any other. She was a clever, amusing child, had more depth of character, and was more unselfish and affectionate than her more attractive

sister. But she was rough, often rude in manner; and with a superabundance of animal spirits, and decision of will, she was rather too boisterous a companion for Lizzie, who cast many a longing glance up at Johnnie and Kate, while she laboured most patiently to answer all Boy's overwhelming questions about everything she saw, and to satisfy her unreasonable requirements in the repair of a favourite cart and horse which she had broken.

The children were never so happy as when with their older sisters, and the girls never tired of playing with the children; so that nurse's sage admonitions upon the advisability of the little ones taking a quick walk, were, I am sorry to say, disregarded, and the nursery party were not allowed to move until Robie's arrival turned every one's thoughts into a new channel.

Robie had displayed his flag with all due exactitude; but Jamie had deserted his post, and was too well amused, leading about his little queen upon her pony, to think how time was going on: and although Kate still sat upon the high step, her whole attention was engrossed in the attempt to make Johnnie pronounce the long Indian name of the station to which papa and mamma had gone, and Robie was close beside them before any one saw him. The children were then at once given up to nurse, while the others ran down the road to get the treasure. Kate was first.

"It is to grandmamma," she cried, in a disappointed tone; "we might just as well have stayed at home."

“Not quite,” Lizzie said, more cheerfully. “We know at least that they have got safe to Edinburgh.”

Safe! The word struck with pain upon Kate’s lively fancy. She had never dreamed of the possibility of their being anything but safe. And now with the word came such vivid pictures of its opposite, busy images of accidents of every imaginable kind—overturned coaches, broken legs, broken arms, dead bodies—every horror imagination could suggest. And then the letter was in Hugh’s handwriting. It was so much more likely that Kenneth should have written than Hugh, unless Kenneth were ill. And Kate, as she hurried along the homeward road, tormented herself with a hundred conjectures as to the reason why Kenneth had not written. With an over-sensitiveness characteristic of her, she began to reproach herself that she had been thinking far too little of Kenneth during the last few days. Hugh was most like herself, and her regrets had naturally turned most upon him. But this she now looked upon as a sin, which was to be punished by Kenneth’s illness, perhaps death. And, in short, so well did she manage, so ingenious was her self-tormenting, that by the time she reached her grandmother’s parlour she felt quite ill with anxiety, or rather with alarm—for she had carried herself past anxiety—and was nearly sure that Hugh had some bad tidings to tell.

Mrs Grahame had to seek her spectacles before she could read the letter. And while she deliberately drew

them out of their case, wiped them, and put them on, Kate was inclined to snatch the letter out of her hand, and open it herself. She stood breathless, watching while her grandmamma quietly read the first few lines, and then, unable to bear longer suspense, she asked, in a faltering tone, if they were both well and safe. The tremor in the voice at once attracted the old lady's attention, understanding Kate's character as she did; she looked up quickly, as she answered in a sharp way,

"Well and safe! What should ail them to be well and safe? What have you been doing with yourself, you silly bairn, to get cheeks as white as these?"

Kate's cheeks were red enough now, as she turned away from her grandmamma's keen searching gaze, and answered that she had been doing nothing with herself, only she thought, perhaps, something might have happened. She did not know but that something might have happened. None of them could know.

"True, none of us could know, and so you have been persuading yourself you did know, and you have been making yourself feel sure that something had happened. Ah! Katie, Katie, when will you learn sense? If anything had happened, and some one had been wanted to go to town to see to the laddies, what use would you have been, with your trembling hands and sick heart? Bairn, bairn, mind this—it is a sin, both to God and man to let our foolish fancies get the better of us, so as

to make us unable either to see what is to be done or to do it."

This was said vehemently, but not unkindly; and, as if sympathising even in the anxiety she blamed, she called to the girls to stand on each side of her, that they might all read the letter at once.

Every word was interesting to them. They entered fully into Hugh's feelings in his difficulty about the coachman, sympathised with all their hearts in his longings after home, fully accepted his hasty judgment of his new relatives, and pitied him most sincerely for being sent to live with such disagreeable people.

The old lady was pleased with the letter; but she made no remark until she came to the postscript, when she laughed heartily, and exclaimed—

"The daft callant! as if I needed him to tell me what to think of my own son and daughter."

The girls, in their eager interest, had failed to mark this absurdity; and when it was pointed out to them, they were as much mortified as if they had themselves committed it.

"He would not think of that, grandmamma," Lizzie urged. "He would only think of keeping us from being unhappy in fancying that he and Kenneth were so."

"But, grandmamma," eagerly asked Kate, "do you think grandpapa will keep back Hugh's money?"

"I think he will; and I hope he will, my dear," she answered decidedly.

“O grandmamma! and he wishes so much to buy his knife at Christmas.”

“And I shall be sorry if he cannot buy it. But still I think grandpapa should make him pay for his folly. He is a dear good laddie our Hugh; but if he is to grow up the man I hope and expect him to be, he must learn to do the right thing at all times, and not to concern himself about what people may think of him or expect from him.”

“But still, grandmamma, I do hope grandpapa will give him the money.”

“Well, well,” with a good-humoured smile, “it is quite likely; for Hugh is a great pet of his grandfather’s.”

“And you won’t persuade grandpapa not to give it to him?”

“No; I’ll say nothing. I’ll leave grandpapa to judge for himself.”

Grandpapa soon came home, and the letter was given to him to read. The girls stood by, impatient to hear his verdict. He read it through with manifest satisfaction.

“It is a good letter,” he said heartily—“so like the laddie himself; I hate composed letters. Hugh writes just as he thinks.”

“And about the money, grandpapa?” asked Kate. “Will you keep back his money?”

“I am afraid I must, Katie, dear. You see he is a foolish boy in matters of this kind, and the only way to

teach him sense is to make him feel the consequence of his folly."

"But only for this once, dear grandpapa," pleaded both girls. "He is so anxious to buy the large pocket-knife."

"I am sorry to be cruel, my dear lassies," he answered very kindly; "and all the more sorry because he tells the story so honestly, without making the least excuse for himself, and without ever seeming to doubt that he should pay back the money. But if I were to pay it for him this time, don't you see yourselves that it would spoil that good honest feeling? Next time he would not look upon it as so much a matter of course that he must mend his own mistakes."

The girls said no more; for they saw that their grandfather had made up his mind, and they did not wish to plague him with more entreaties. But they would not allow themselves to be convinced by his reasonings. They could not be content to let Hugh suffer, and in a whispered consultation they agreed to give up a book they had meant to buy between them at Christmas, and send Hugh the sum necessary to buy his knife. Their grandmamma was always their confidant,—even where they were not at all certain of her approbation,—and she was soon informed of their intentions. She smiled in her pleasant kindly way.

"Ah well, bairns," she said, "we can't expect that you should be willing to take all our wisdom for granted. I

care the less about your interfering with grandpapa's discipline, because I know Hugh well. He will either refuse to take your money, or, if he takes it to please you, he will be far more vexed that you should lose your book than that he should go without his knife. So the punishment comes home to him either way."

The girls looked at each other. They felt at once that their grandmother was right; and, unwilling to give Hugh the pain of either refusing or accepting, they gave up their plan, and tried, as best they could, to reconcile themselves to his disappointment. Some present comfort, at least, was found in the pleasure of reading the letter to the little ones, and in carrying it round to all the servants, and listening anew to the many lamentations over the absence of the young gentlemen—the many different ways in which the different members of the household sounded their praises.





CHAPTER III.

AUNT JANE.



ALL the family at Birkenholme had agreed in thinking it unlike Kenneth to go to bed and leave the burden of writing home upon his younger brother. But this unusual laziness was only too well accounted for in Hugh's next letter. Kenneth was very unwell.

He had felt his throat a little sore the morning he left home ; but he had not mentioned it, as he supposed their going that day was inevitable, and he did not wish to alarm his grandmother. The day was blustering, with frequent heavy showers. As Hugh had incidentally mentioned, Kenneth gave his plaid to a sick, poorly-clad boy, who sat beside him. Hugh had insisted on putting his round them both, but the shelter it gave was not sufficient for the weather they encountered, and Kenneth, who sat on the windward side, was wet through once or twice in the course of the day, and by the time they got to Edinburgh, felt chilled to the heart and very unwell. They did not reach their uncle's house until the

evening, and went to their bed-room immediately after tea, so that his uncle and aunt had little time to find out that he was not well ; and being among strangers, he did not like to "make a fuss," as he expressed it, so he went straight to bed, without telling even Hugh that he was ill. He fell into a heavy sleep, but awoke long before daylight, feeling his throat very sore, his head aching, and a burning heat all over his body. He did not sleep again, but tossed about all night, restless and miserable, all the more miserable from the thought that he was away from home, and from the kind grandmother and sisters, whose nursing seemed to his feverish fancy the only thing that could do him good. He was too unselfish to awake Hugh until it was time for him to get up. But then he was obliged to confess the true state of the case, and to yield to Hugh's entreaties that he would lie still until some one had seen him. Hugh hardly remembered to have seen Kenneth ill before, and he was all the more alarmed at his present attack, because they were so far away from grandmamma, in whose skill as a doctor he had unbounded faith. He hurried through his dressing and went out to seek advice. On the previous evening, when the nurse had come to the drawing-room for baby, Hugh had been struck with her cheerful, pleasant countenance, and it was to her he determined to have recourse. The noise of children's tongues guided him to the nursery, where nurse received him quite as kindly as he expected. When, however, he began to tell

his tale, the mention of a sore throat suggested scarlet fever to nurse's mind. Fears for her own little flock were at once excited, and hastily expressed in a way which aroused Hugh's hot temper and Highland pride. "Was Kenneth, his own good Kenneth, to be looked upon as a nuisance by any one?"

"As if it would not be worse for Kenneth than for any one else, if he had scarlet fever. As if he would have taken it if he could have helped it;" and he left the nursery, and went back to this ill-used brother in high indignation.

If, however, nurse had not said quite the right words in quite the right way, at least she did quite the right thing; she went straight to her mistress, and before Hugh had been two minutes in Kenneth's room, Aunt Jane came in, quiet, collected, full of energy, and full of kindness.

In his letter home Hugh mourned bitterly over this illness of Kenneth's at the beginning of their stay in Edinburgh; but in truth it proved a real good to both boys, as it made them acquainted with the good points in their Aunt Jane's character, far sooner than they could otherwise have been. She was not at all attractive in her manners, particularly not to young people. She was too cold, calm, and decided. She had more depth and steadiness, than tenderness, of affection. Those whom she loved, she loved strongly and constantly, but she did not love many. Even to her husband and children, her

affection was shown more by deeds than by words; while, beside them, there were really very few people for whom she cared at all. Another woman, with her temperament, would have shut herself up in her own home, and, by associating little with those for whom she cared little, her indifference would have been less felt. But Aunt Jane's sense of duty would not suffer her to do this. She felt that she had duties to society as well as to her own family, and these duties she always tried at least to fulfil, although in so cold and heartless a way as made her little liked. She had cordially concurred with her husband in inviting their nephews to spend the winter with them, and was perfectly willing to bear all the trouble this addition to her large household might entail. But she felt little interest in them, and showed this so plainly by her manner, that it was natural enough Hugh should at once decide he could not like her. One softer feature of her character, however, was a kindliness towards people in real trouble. To be helpless and dependent upon her kindness, was the surest way to make Aunt Jane kind. And so Kenneth found it. A mere sense of duty caused her at once to silence nurse's hints about sending Kenneth away. But there was real kindness in the way in which she arranged his bed comfortably, prepared for him the cup of tea, so refreshing to his parched throat, and herself performed for him all the little services he required, even as grandmamma, Lizzie, or Kate might have done.

She seemed to enter fully into the boy's feelings about the scarlet fever, to understand how uncomfortable it must make them to think that they had been the means, however innocently, of bringing danger to their uncle's house ; and in order to relieve their minds, she treated the matter quite lightly. They had really no reason, she said, to think that Kenneth had scarlet fever ; and even if he had, the only thing to be done was to get him well as quickly as possible, before grandmother had time to feel alarmed about him, and before the next Indian mail. Altogether, her manner was so encouraging and cheerful, that both boys felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted off them. And even prejudiced Hugh admitted that Aunt Jane was a capital person in sickness, and in every way more pleasant than he had supposed.

Uncle George, too, showed a most satisfactory degree of concern about Kenneth, and of sympathy in Hugh's anxiety. So that Hugh's letter on this day made the anxious sisters at home much more comfortable about the chances of happiness the brothers might have in their new situation.

When the doctor arrived, soon after breakfast, he at once decided that there was no scarlet fever in the case. The boy had caught cold, he said, and had been made very feverish by the fatigue and excitement of his long journey. But he hoped that a quiet day in bed would cure him. He directed that he should be kept very

quiet, and not allowed to talk or to read. And, indeed, so soon as the prescribed medicine had reduced his fever, Kenneth felt no inclination to do anything except sleep.

In the fervour of his anxiety, Hugh had declared his intention of remaining in Kenneth's room all day, and had resolutely declined Percy and the younger boys' proposals to show him the town. But Aunt Jane, in her quiet decided manner, settled that matter for him. He might stay beside Kenneth, she said, while he wrote his letter home, and even longer if Kenneth happened to be asleep, and Hugh could read quietly beside him, and not move about to awaken him. But there was to be no talking; and if Kenneth were awake, the two brothers could not be left alone together. At two o'clock, she added, his Uncle George would be ready to take him to be introduced to the master in the Edinburgh Academy, under whose tuition he was to be placed, and Hugh must go when it was most convenient for his uncle to take him.

Hugh did not at all approve of such dictation from one who, in his opinion, had no right to dictate to him at all. But as Aunt Jane spoke with the air of one who never doubted her orders must be obeyed, and turned away to attend to other matters so soon as she had finished, he had no opportunity of making the remonstrance which rose to his tongue, nor of showing her that he considered himself ill-used by her interference in

his concerns. And, in truth, by the time two o'clock came, he was not sorry to have a good excuse for abandoning for a time his self-imposed office. Kenneth had been sleeping for the last two hours without awakening. He seemed already so much better, that Hugh's anxiety for him was much lessened. And, no doubt, it was very tiresome for a restless boy like Hugh to be shut up in a sick room alone with a sleeping companion. As he wrote in a confidential letter to Kate, "No doubt it is a dreadful plague to have Aunt Jane tell me, in her calm voice, 'You are to do this,' and 'you are to do that,' and I often feel so provoked with her, that I could lie down on the floor and kick, as I used to do long ago when a naughty boy in the nursery. Yet, after all, she is generally quite right in what she bids us do. And, really, if she had not bid me, I often should quite like to do it. And, besides, like it or not, she has so much the air of thinking it impossible any one should dispute her will; and when I flounce out of the room and slam the door after me, she seems so utterly unconseious that it is because I am angry with her, that, on the whole, there seems little use in fretting, and the only comfortable thing is to obey." So he found it in this instance, when he was obliged not only to obey her, but also to acknowledge that her orders had been judicious, and more conducive to his pleasure than his own wilful plans could have been.

He did not return from his walk with his uncle until

nearly four o'clock. He went into the drawing-room where Mrs Grahame was. She told him that Kenneth was awake, that he was much better, and very anxious to hear what Hugh had been doing.

"So," she added, "if you will sit quietly down beside him, and tell him about your walk, without fuss or noise, you may do so. But do not make him talk, for he is still rather feverish, and his throat is still sore."

If Hugh had heard, or attended to more of this speech than the permission to go up beside Kenneth, he certainly remembered no more of it. He ran up-stairs two steps at a time, dashed into the room, and, seating himself at one spring upon the front of Kenneth's bed, he poured forth all his news in a breathless stream.

"O Kenneth, I am so glad you are better. I am so glad Aunt Jane has allowed me to come up," he began. "And, Kenneth, I like Mr B—— so much. I am so glad he is to be my teacher. And, O Kenneth, only think he knew papa when he was a boy. He was at Glasgow High School with papa. And he says he was such a fine fellow. And he said to me, 'If you are anything like what your father was at your age, it will be a pleasure to teach you. You will be a credit to me and to all connected with you.' And, Kenneth, do you know I am resolved to be like papa in everything."

"If you can," Kenneth remarked, with a quiet smile. The wild eager boy presented to him at that moment

an amusing contrast with his father. Hugh did not heed, perhaps did not hear, the remark. He went on.

“Mr B—— said that the elder boys—he is a good deal older than papa, you know. And he said the elder boys and the masters always said that papa would be a great man, and do great things, if he lived. And I told him about papa in the wars in Spain and at Waterloo, and how the Duke of Wellington had, at two different times, thanked him in person for what he had done, and how every one said that he was always the same—always ready for service, and always doing his duty better than any one else. And Mr B—— seemed so pleased. But he said that, even if he had never heard papa’s name mentioned again, he would still have been sure that he had distinguished himself in some way or other, he was such a noble fellow. And do you know, Kenneth, I have been thinking about it all the way home, and I am quite determined to be a great man, and to distinguish myself. Is not that a good thought, Kenneth?”

“A very good thought, Hugh,” he answered; but the languor of illness was still on him, and he spoke more soberly than suited the younger brother’s vehement temper.

“Why, Kenneth,” he cried, pettishly, “you speak as if you were not sure. Certainly it must be right to wish to be a great man.”

“It depends a good deal upon the kind of greatness,”

Kenneth answered with a sly smile, his love of humour coming back to him. "You know there are great fools, and great knaves, and——"

"Tut, Kenneth, you know what I mean," Hugh said angrily. "How can you be so tiresome?"

"Yes, I do know what you mean. You mean that you wish to be a wise and a good man, to do noble service to God and man."

"Yes, I want to be so wise and good as that every one shall be forced to take notice of it."

"Ah, as to that," said Kenneth quickly, "that is no business of ours. The less we concern ourselves about that part of the business, the better."

"How, Kenneth? Why? I don't understand you."

"I mean that it is right and noble to wish to be wise and good—even wiser and better than any man that ever lived. But there is no nobleness in wishing to be thought so. And it is better not to think at all of people's noticing us, or that kind of thing."

"Why, what harm does it do to think about it?" Hugh asked a little discontentedly. Kenneth looked thoughtful, and did not immediately answer, and Hugh repeated the question impatiently, kicking with his feet against the front of the bed.

"Why, what harm does it do? Why don't you answer me, Kenneth?"

"Because I was thinking, Hugh; and I think, indeed I am sure, that a really great man should not think about

himself at all. He should so give himself up altogether to do what he has to do, as that there could be no room in his head for thought or wish about what people might think of him."

"Ah yes, you are right, Kenneth," was Hugh's hearty assent, and he added, after a moment's pause, "I think you are always right. How do you manage to think right all in a minute? If I blunder out right in the end that is all I can do."

"I did not think right all in a minute," Kenneth answered laughing. "I have thought a good deal about this before."

"When? how? I am sure you and I never spoke about it before."

"As if a rattling fellow like you were at all likely to remember whether we had spoken of it or not. However, I do not know that we ever did speak of it. But, long ago, when we lived at Glengoile, don't you recollect how fond we used to be of going to see papa's old soldier, M'Lean, and of getting him to tell us about papa's battles."

"Recollect! To be sure I do. But what of that?"

"Do you not recollect how the wise old man used to say, 'Ah, you boys think your father was a great soldier, because he fought so bravely,' and so he was. But the time I thought him greatest was when he was left in command of that little out-of-the-way post in Spain,

where there was nothing to be done but to keep quiet, and to bear hunger, and thirst, and cold, and weariedness. He knew quite well that it was mere spite in a certain general that had made him be sent there. But he did not care for that. He did his duty all the same, with all his heart. And while his friends were away gaining honour and glory, there he stayed, brave, patient, cheerful, without murmuring, without grudging, labouring night and day to keep his men in good order, and in good heart, and giving his whole mind to contrive for their good and comfort."

"Oh, I remember now," Hugh interrupted, eagerly, "and M·Lean said that papa knew quite well that no one would ever give him credit for all he did, that all the praise and glory would fall upon the men who were fighting."

"Yes; and he said that when every one was shouting and cheering round us, and our blood was up, it was easy enough to fight like a man, and gain praise and glory. But that the difficult thing was to keep back when duty required, and to give our whole heart to doing what no one would ever know we had done. And I used to think a great deal about what he said—for you know he was such a good, wise man—papa used to say there were few like him. And once I asked papa what he thought it was to be a great man. And he said it was to give one's whole heart, at all times, to do the best thing in the best way."

“Ah!” cried Hugh, vehemently, “I like that. That is the kind of great man I will be.”

“And then,” Kenneth pursued, thoughtfully, “don’t you see in papa’s case there would have been harm of allowing himself to think about people’s taking notice of him. Of course, any way he must have stayed at the post where he was placed. But if he had been thinking about his own glory, he never could have been so patient and cheerful, and then he could not have kept his men in good spirits and courage, which M’Lean said was better service to the whole army than if he had fought half a dozen battles.”

“And now I recollect something Uncle George said about papa to Mr B——, which goes to your side too,” said Hugh. “Ah, Kenneth, you should have heard Uncle George speak about papa. It made me love him. And I am determined I shall love him however cold and stiff he is.”

“But about papa? What did he say about papa?”

“He said that papa had such a fine mind, such splendid talents, and that education, experience, and observation had done the utmost for him—that he was fit for any place, however high, or however difficult the work. And he said that when papa went on half-pay, after his wound at Waterloo, all his influential friends wished him to go into Parliament, where he was sure to make a figure. And he said that, like most talented men, papa knew what was in him, knew he could distin-

guish himself, and that it was quite work to his taste. But he believed that duty called him elsewhere, and he was steady against all arguments and persuasions. And then he went on to tell, what I never knew before, the reason why we lived so long with grandpapa at Glengoile. He said that grandpapa had quarrelled with Uncle Maurice because he had not married as grandpapa wished. Don't you remember how we used to wonder why Uncle Maurice never came to Glengoile? And grandpapa was feeble, and left everything to a bad factor, who neglected the property and oppressed the poor tenants. And so when papa found that grandpapa wished him to live at Glengoile, and to take charge of everything, he gave up all his own plans and wishes, that he might help the poor, starving, miserable people, whom no one else would help. And for twelve years he lived in that wild place, labouring with all his heart and mind to do good to those who for a long time did not even thank him for what he did. And then, when grandpapa died, and papa had got Uncle Maurice to understand and be interested in all his great plans for the people, and he and mamma thought they might please themselves in their way of life, then the great people in London begged papa to take a command in India,—where, as Uncle George said, there was a great deal to do, and little credit or thanks to be got for doing it,—and papa took it at once, just because it was proved to him that no one else was willing, at least no one who

could do what was wanted. O Kenneth, I am sure papa is the right kind of great man. I mean to be like papa."

"We should begin at once, then, Hugh. Schoolboys can give their whole heart to do the best thing in the best way, just as well as men."

"Ah! but then, Kenneth, the best thing for us must so often be to study hard. And those lessons—oh! those horrible lessons;" and with a comical groan of despair Hugh threw himself back upon the bed, rolling his head from side to side, and kicking up his feet in the air.

At this moment the door opened, and Aunt Jane came in.

"Hugh, what are you doing there?" she asked, in her calm, changeless tones, expressing neither surprise nor anger, only dignified reproof and authority.

Hugh, conscious and ashamed, sprang out of bed, and began to pull the bed-clothes straight, with a haste and awkwardness which did far more harm than good.

"Go away from the bed altogether," said Aunt Jane. "Brush your hair, and wash your face and hands, to be ready for dinner. You must go down with me. I see I cannot trust you beside Kenneth."

Hugh walked off in high indignation at being so coolly treated. "As if I were a baby!" he muttered.

Aunt Jane set down a little tray she carried, and smoothed the bed-clothes, and shook up Kenneth's pil-

lows with a gentleness and kindness which touched his heart, and must have softened Hugh's anger, if he had condescended to observe her. All through the day she had waited upon Kenneth with the same kindness and attention. Every two hours she had come up to give him his medicine. She had thought of, and with her own hands prepared for him pleasant drinks ; and now she had brought up his dinner, that she might be sure everything about it was as it should be. Kenneth was not a boy to be unobservant of all such kindness, or ungrateful for it, and he was only sorry that Hugh should so much misunderstand his aunt, and be so unwilling to see her good qualities. Kenneth's temper was much less fiery than Hugh's, and, besides, his position as an invalid prevented him from feeling any degradation in submitting quietly to the dictation of his nurse ; so that when, after he had finished his dinner, Aunt Jane drew down his curtain, and ordained he should go to sleep, he felt only grateful for the kind care which had dictated the command.

Hugh followed his aunt, somewhat sullenly, to the drawing-room. Elizabeth was there at work. She looked up as they came in, and asked how Kenneth was, with an appearance of real interest. This little circumstance, coupled with the knowledge that Elizabeth had been reading to Kenneth while he was out, quite softened Hugh's heart towards her, and he went up to the window where she sat, with a vague purpose of making her

the confidant of his anxiety about Kenneth, and sorrow for his illness.

If such had been his intention, he received no encouragement from Elizabeth. She was shy, like her father, and with a proud shyness which made her unwilling to place herself in any situation where she was not sure how she should acquit herself. A good deal older than her schoolboy brothers, and with only dim recollections of what Percival had been at their age, she did not understand the nature of schoolboys, and took no trouble to learn how to please them. Kenneth had interested her from the first by his natural courtesy and gentleness of manner. She was sincerely sorry for him in his present circumstances,—ill among strangers, and unable to see or enjoy the novelties of his new mode of life,—and she was anxious to do anything she could to amuse him in his confinement; and Kenneth had unconsciously increased the interest she felt in him by his gratitude for her kindness, and the intelligence with which he had listened to her reading, and remarked upon what she read. But Hugh was in excellent health. He did not require her services. Sympathy in a schoolboy's troubles or joys was a thing it seemed impossible to her to feel—a thing, indeed, it had never occurred to her a schoolboy could require or wish for. She looked suspiciously at Hugh's shoes, which he had neglected to change, and drew her pretty silk dress out of their way, while she watched anxiously the near approach of his awkward

elbows to the little table on which her working materials were placed.

The quick-sighted boy saw, and at once understood, both action and glance ; and with a heart full of contempt and indignation, he turned away to another window, where he stood looking out, brooding over all the evil qualities of Aunt Jane and her children, and over all his causes of complaint—not the least among which was, that his own dear Lizzie's name should be borne by one so every way unlike her.





CHAPTER IV.

HUGH GAINS A LITTLE WISDOM.

HUGH was beginning to be wearied of his own grumbling thoughts, when he saw the twins, George and Edward, come up the front-door steps. His anger had extended to them too; for, as they were his own age, he thought they ought to have shown him more attention than they had yet done. But when he saw them come in, the desire for some new occupation, some new turn to his thoughts, made him run down-stairs to meet them. They were talking eagerly as they came in, and took no notice of Hugh—asked no question about Kenneth. Again Hugh's heart swelled with a sense of ill-usage, and he stood proudly aside, and suffered them to go on talking without interruption. The boys seemed troubled and anxious.

“I say, Edward,” said George, eagerly, “how would it do to get Percy to ask papa about it? He is always ready to help us, and papa thinks a great deal of what Percy says.”

“Nonsense,” replied the other, impatiently. “If Percy knew Burke was at that school, he would be more opposed to it than papa. He would be more likely to persuade papa the other way.”

“But we need not tell him anything about Burke. There are plenty of good reasons why we should wish to go to Dr S——’s school.”

Hugh heard no more, for the boys went up-stairs, and he did not choose to follow them; and he did not see them again until they met at the dinner-table.

This meal was a very uninteresting one to Hugh. Aunt Jane spoke little, except to give orders to servants or children. Elizabeth did not speak at all. George and Edward now and then whispered to each other, and were called to account by the watchful mother of the family; while Percy and Uncle George discussed business matters which Hugh could not understand, and did not care for. He sighingly contrasted the stupidity and silence of the party with the social, free converse of the dinner-table at dear Birkenholme, and came again to the conclusion that both elders and youngers of the family were equally stiff and disagreeable.

Towards the end of dinner, some one remarked that the boys had been out all day, and their mother asked what they had been doing. Neither seemed disposed to answer; but at last Edward said, with a good deal of hesitation and embarrassment,

“We met— we met— we met a boy as we were coming

from Uncle John's, and he asked us to go up Arthur's Seat with him, and we went, and did not get back till dinner-time."

"Who was the boy?" asked Mrs Grahame.

Edward did not reply until the question was repeated more peremptorily, when he said, in an apologetic tone,

"Oh, it was only Burke."

The name seemed at once to catch his father's ear.

"Burke!" he repeated. "Is that fellow in Edinburgh again? I hoped we had got rid of him. But how came you boys to be with him all day, when you knew I wished you to have nothing to do with him?"

This was asked sternly, and Edward looked down silent and abashed. George spoke with an air of assumed indifference.

"Why, you know, papa, when he asked us to go, and we had really no other engagement, it would have been rude to refuse."

"Yes," said Mrs Grahame, looking at her husband, "it might have been rude to refuse to go without a sufficient reason."

"I don't wish you to be rude to any one," he answered, in a softened tone. "But remember, both of you, it is my positive command that you have as little to do with that boy as possible. I hope I can trust to your honour as to how far the possibility extends."

No more was said. Hugh had listened attentively. Although he had felt little interest in what the boys had

been talking about in the lobby before dinner, the name of "Burke" had fixed itself on his memory; because he had at the time connected it with Edmund Burke, of whom he and his sisters had been reading just before he left home, and with the murderer Burke, whose memory was still fresh in every one's mind. He looked keenly at his cousins, and at once read in their troubled countenances that the Burke whom they desired for a school-fellow, was the Burke their father condemned. With Hugh's present impression of being too authoritatively dealt with, he was quite inclined to take the boys' side of the question, and to think his uncle tyrannical because he had forbidden them to associate with one whom they so much liked. As he was leaving the dining-room, however, a few words fell from Percy, which rather modified Hugh's judgment, and also inclined him to like Percy better than he had done before.

Percy lingered after his father and mother, and catching hold of Edward as he was going out, he put his arm affectionately round his neck, and said, with great earnestness and kindness—

"Dear Edward, I do so very much wish you and George could be persuaded to see that boy Burke as he really is. I cannot bear that you should make a friend of such a bad boy."

"But, Percy, he is not a bad boy. That is the thing. People are unjust to him."

"My dear Edward, you deceive yourself. Why should

every one be unjust to him? Depend upon it, if so many different people speak ill of him, it is only because he deserves it. And do you really think he would have been expelled from the Academy unless there had been strong proof? It is hard upon you to give up a friend you love, I know. But do be persuaded to take the opinion of those who know him better than you do, and keep away from him."

Percy spoke very affectionately, and Edward seemed moved by his manner. But before he could answer, George pulled him away from Percy, saying impatiently—

"Tut, there is no use your preaching; papa won't let us have anything to say to him, and that is enough." And the two boys ran up to their own room without further parley.

Percy stood still a moment, looking thoughtful and grieved. Hugh looked at him curiously. Because he was called "Percival" instead of Hugh, Hugh had at once decided he must be a stiff, conceited fellow; and not all Percy's kindness to himself had been able to shake this belief. But the earnestness and affection of his manner to his brothers, the absence of all anger at their unceremonious treatment, and the look of deep care and anxiety for them which his countenance now wore, combined to make Hugh feel he had been wrong, and with the quick impulsiveness of his nature, he told Percy all his mind.

"I thought you were a stiff, set-up fellow, because you

had put away grandpapa's good name," he said, looking frankly up in Percy's face; "but I see you are very good and kind, and I am sorry I thought it, and sorry the boys won't listen to you. But," in a consolatory tone, "may be they will think afterwards of what you have said. I know, when any one crosses me, I often say very bad things, and try to seem as if I did not care; but then afterwards, when I am cool, I begin to recollect, and almost always find out I was quite wrong. I am sure the boys will find out that too."

Percy smiled good-humouredly, and thanked Hugh for his sympathy; and then, as he had observed Hugh's disappointed look, when Mrs Grahame had refused to allow him to go up to Kenneth, he invited him to go to his room, and kept him well amused until tea-time, showing him a little museum which he had collected, and encouraging him to speak about home, and all the dear ones there. Hugh was delighted with Percy, and told him confidentially, that he was "really a capital, good fellow;" and Percy, on his side, was much pleased with Hugh's honesty, good feeling, and intelligence.

The doctor came to see Kenneth after tea, and pronounced him much better; so Aunt Jane relaxed her strict rule, and the two brothers were allowed to be together. Aunt Jane ordained that they should go early to bed, and neither were inclined to disobey the order.

After so exciting a day, Hugh felt nearly as tired as Kenneth; and soon after eight o'clock, proposed to read their chapter aloud.

"I am not going to read in the regular place," he said; "I am going to read something I want to read;" and, turning to the Book of Joshua, he read the first, fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters. He read with great spirit, as if his whole heart was in what he read, and he gave, with particular emphasis, the repeated, "Be strong, and of a good courage;" the Lord's answer to Joshua, "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come;" and his rebuke to Joshua in the seventh chapter, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"

When he closed his Bible, Kenneth asked him why he had chosen these chapters. Hugh looked up with an arch smile.

"Ah! Kenneth," he said, shaking his head, "if you only knew how Aunt Jane tries me, you would understand that I must have a good many enemies to fight before I can be even tolerably good; and that I am glad to say to myself, 'Be strong and very courageous,' and specially glad to remember that the Captain of the Lord's host will fight with me."

"And so you think it should be said to you, as to Joshua, 'Get up; why lie you on your face?'"

"Yes; that is just what I think, or at least did think. This afternoon, when Aunt Jane carried me off in that

provoking, dictatorial way, I was so angry; and when Elizabeth looked stiff and disagreeable, that made me fifty times worse; and I stood in the window, and encouraged myself to think all kind of bad thoughts; and rage, and contempt, and hatred, just ran wild over my whole heart. The men of Ai you see defeating everything that was right. And then, when I began to see all that wrongness, I was like Joshua, when he complained, ‘Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites?’ and I grumbled because God had brought me into a place where I could not do right. Don’t you see, Kenneth, how well I deserved to have it said to me, ‘Get up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?’”

“Yes; I see why you chose the chapters. I partly guessed the reason before, and I thought that Joseph’s history would have suited you finely.”

“Joseph’s history! Why Joseph’s history? I love Joseph dearly, because he was so good to his cruel brethren. But I don’t see what that has to do with me. I have no cruel brother. And I am sure I am never tempted to do anything but like you and the other brothers and sisters.”

“Oh! but,” said Kenneth, enthusiastically, “besides being good to his brethren, I admire Joseph with all my heart. He was such a fine, manly fellow. In all his sore trials he never lost heart, nor wasted time in grum-

bling; but always rose up, like a man, to do what came to him to do."

"But, Kenneth," Hugh objected, "where do you see that? It is not in the Bible."

"Oh! perhaps not in so many words," a little contemptuously; "but we can see well enough it was so. When he had been betrayed by his own brethren, and cast into a pit, and sold as a slave, and carried to a strange country, it would have been natural enough if he had lost heart, and given himself up to sorrow. But he did nothing of the kind. He set himself to work with all his heart, and turned out his master's best servant. And, again, in prison he did not waste time groaning over Potiphar's injustice, and his own hard fate, but began again to work at the new work given to him, and did it as well as if he had chosen it for himself."

"It only says in the Bible, that the Lord was with Joseph, and that the Lord made all he did to prosper," Hugh remarked, a little doubtfully.

"Yes, I know that," was Kenneth's confident answer. "But then we know the Lord never makes idle, heartless people to prosper. The Lord has commanded us to do with all our might whatsoever our hands find to do; and so we may be very sure that He would not have helped Joseph as He did, unless Joseph had been working honestly and manfully at the work the Lord brought to his hands."

"I daresay you are right, only I did not think of it

before. But, Kenneth, I think it must always be a little difficult to know what work the Lord means us to do. If I had been Joseph, I think I should have felt that no one had any right to make me a slave; and I should not have felt that I was at all bound to do slaves' work."

"Oh, but Joseph would know that, although it was his brothers who had sold him, still it was permitted of the Lord that he should be sold; and he would see—we know he did see—that it was the Lord who had brought him into Egypt; and he would see that the work the Lord meant him to do was just the work right for the position into which the Lord had brought him, and so he would set himself heartily to do it as the Lord's work."

"And if Joseph were here, Kenneth, what would he think was our work?"

"He would see that when we were given into uncle and aunt's charge, it was their work to look well after us, and keep us all right, and in order," Kenneth said, with a sly look at Hugh; "and he would see that our work was to submit cheerfully to them, and make it easy for them to govern us. And he would see that, if we have been brought here to be under good teachers, and all that kind of thing, it is our duty to be very diligent at our lessons, and to press on as fast as we can while we have so many helps. Certainly, Hugh, God did not give us helps for our learning, that we should be idle and neglect them. All that is easily seen."

“Easily seen, if it were only as easily done,” Hugh answered, rubbing his cheek with a kind of impatient movement usual with him. “Ah, Kenneth,” half laughing, “why should all our work be so mightily disagreeable?”

“Not all, dear Hugh,” Kenneth answered, earnestly. “God has given us so many dear good brothers and sisters, and such a precious papa and mamma; and He means us to love them very much, and that is not hard or disagreeable work.”

“No, indeed,” was the hearty response. “Ah! Kenneth, how is it that I so often forget to thank God for all His goodness to me? He has taught me to pray to Him. And often, when I go to Him, to ask for something I want very much, He lets me feel how very ready He is to hear me, and how full He is of love and tenderness towards me; and my heart seems to get full of it, as if I could not help telling Him everything I think and feel, and all the good things I want Him to give me. But very seldom do I ever remember to praise Him for all He does. And isn’t it shockingly mean to be always begging and never thanking?” and the tears rose to his eyes.

Kenneth assented, and added, earnestly—

“And we have more to be thankful for than most people. If it were for nothing else, how much ought we to thank God for having made so many of us think and feel in the same way about Himself—papa and mamma,

and you and the girls, and grandpapa and grandmamma! Ah, Hugh, if you only knew how miserable I used often to be in that first year after God had made me care about Him, and when you would not think, and would not care!"

"Don't I know?" eagerly interrupted Hugh. "Why, Kenneth, do you think I have forgotten how you used to speak to me, and how you used to give up all your own plans and amusements to do whatever I wished, and all you asked in return was leave to read to me a little out of the Bible or to pray with me? And oh, Kenneth, do you remember that day when I found you behind the heather rock praying for me? You did not know I was there, and I heard all you said. And you spoke as if you were so sure God was near, and heard you. It frightened me dreadfully. I thought, if God were so near, He saw me, and all the evil in me. And I turned away, and went over the moor as fast as I could; but I could not get away from God. And I grew more and more afraid; and I tried to recollect all the good things I had ever done, and to spread them out before God. But they were so few, and even the few were worth so little. And even while I tried to make them look greater, these words came down into my very heart, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* the words of this law to do them.' So that made me give over trying, and I stood still and trembled, for it seemed as if God were saying, 'Cursed' to me. And then, when I got

so afraid, I could bear it no more. I turned, and ran back to you."

"Oh, I remember," Kenneth cried, with glistening eyes, "you came up to me, and threw your arms round my neck, and cried out, 'O Kenneth, God sees all my sins, and what can I do?'"

"And you took me all in your arms, and whispered in such a trembling voice, 'Jesus Christ loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood.' And that was just the thing for me. I seemed in a moment to recollect how it is said that Christ died for sinners, and that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And, as I had felt before that God was very near with a holy anger against my sins, so I felt now, that He was very near with a holy forgiveness for them. For I saw that, if Christ had borne the punishment of my sins, God was too holy, too faithful and just, to take me also to account for them; and I understood then what you had meant when you used to pray that God would give me His Holy Spirit to teach me to know and believe all that Christ had done for sinners. I used to wonder why you asked that, for I thought I did believe it already; and so I did after a manner. But it was only as a something I had little concern with. Now it was the dearest and best thing in all the world—my heart seemed fuller than it could hold." Hugh stopped in deep emotion.

"I remember," said Kenneth, much moved also,

“how you raised your head and cried out aloud, ‘O God, I thank Thee that Thou hast given us the Lord Jesus Christ to save us.’”

There was a short silence, and then Kenneth said, thoughtfully—

“How different it was with you and me, Hugh! For many months after God had showed me how sinful my heart was, I went about very unhappy, trying to make myself good, and not able; and, although papa and mamma used to tell me that Christ wished to take me just as I was, and that it was His business to make me good, still I went on trying to do it myself for a long time. But you gave up the fight at once.”

“Because I knew how wild I was, and that it could be of no use for me to try,” Hugh said, simply.

“Another great difference between us was in our being able to speak out,” Kenneth pursued. “I used to find it so difficult to speak to any one. You do not know how difficult it was to speak to you, Hugh.”

“But that was not your fault,” Hugh interposed, eagerly. “It was all my fault—I was so unwilling to listen, so rude and ungracious.”

“But even to mamma I found it difficult to speak; while you, Hugh, seemed able to speak to everybody. I remember how you ran into the drawing-room that day, and threw yourself down beside mamma, and hid your face on her lap, and cried, ‘O mamma, do you know Christ has washed out all my sins in His blood.’”

And you used to speak quite freely to every one—to grandpapa, and the servants, and every one.”

“It is not so easy to me now, Kenneth,” Hugh said. “And, do you know, I think God made me speak in that way then for grandpapa’s sake.”

“I know what you mean. I remember papa said he and mamma had tried for so many years to persuade grandpapa to read the Bible, and he never would listen to them, and said he did not see what there was in religion to make such a fuss about. But when you began to speak, he thought there must be something in it.”

“Yes, because I was such a wild, thoughtless fellow,” Hugh interrupted, “he thought there must be some great truth in these things to make even me care for them. And God made me so very anxious that he should care, I often could not help crying about it; and that surprised him, and made him listen to me. And, after he began to care, he often asked me questions he did not like to ask papa. So you see, Kenneth, I think God made me anxious to speak just for that reason.”

“That is what I mean, Hugh, when I say that we have so many things to be thankful for. It seems to me as if God took such care of us, and made things go so right for us. Now, even this very cold of mine, see how it has made me know Aunt Jane, and like her—for I really do like her.”

Hugh made a comical face at the thought of liking

Aunt Jane; but the mention of her name reminded the boys that they should not talk more, but go to bed as she had advised.

Kenneth was nearly asleep when Hugh startled him by rising suddenly on his elbow, and saying in a very wide-awake tone—

“I say, Kenneth, do you know I have gained some wisdom to-day.”

“Have you?” in a very sleepy voice.

“Yes, I have got two very good pieces of wisdom. One I got for myself about Percy. I thought he was stiff and conceited, only because he was called Percival; and I never thought of looking how he did things, or spoke, or anything of that kind, but just made sure that he was stiff and conceited; and now I have found out he is a real, first-rate fellow, good and kind, and every way capital. The other piece of wisdom you taught me when you said that, as God had put us under Aunt Jane’s charge, He meant that she should look after us and keep us in order. I see she should, and so I am determined to submit more patiently to her.”

A snore was his only answer.

“Why, Kenneth,” he cried, half amazed, half vexed, “have you fallen asleep while I was talking sense? That is a turning of the world upside down.”

And so saying, he turned his back upon his sleeping companion, and soon followed his example.



CHAPTER V.

GEORGE AND EDWARD.



GOOD night's rest made Kenneth nearly well.

When he awoke next morning, his fever was gone, his headache gone, and his throat nearly well. Had he been her own son Mrs Grahame would have allowed him to get up and go about the house. But feeling the full responsibility of having the care of another person's child, she desired him to remain in bed until Dr Hill had paid his visit. And Kenneth was obliged to submit with what patience he could muster.

While the family were at breakfast, Percy repeated his kind offer of taking Hugh to see some of the sights of Edinburgh. But Hugh resolutely declined going to see anything until Kenneth could go with him. And Percy did not press the matter, but contented himself with showing his good-will by lending Hugh a volume of very fine engravings, to show to Kenneth, who had a passion for drawing.

The two brothers were happily engaged with the book when Edward came to ask Hugh to come down to the play-room, where he and George wished to speak to him.

"Oh, I cannot come now," he said, ungraciously, "I am busy with Kenneth."

"Yes, yes, he will come," cried Kenneth, adding in a lower tone, "For shame, Hugh! How can you be so disobliging? He'll be down in two or three minutes," to Edward, "when we have finished looking at this one series of prints."

Hugh did not enjoy the prints they now looked at. He was too busy murmuring against his cousins and against Kenneth.

"What business have you to say I would go? I am not going just where you choose to tell me," and so on.

Kenneth took not the least notice of these murmurs, but, when they had looked at the last print of the series, he quietly closed the book, and, looking up at Hugh with a pleasant smile, said simply, "Now, you will go," and Hugh, unable to resist his influence, went, though with a bad grace.

He found George and Edward impatiently waiting for him. They entered at once on the business in hand, by asking him if it was quite decided he was to go to the Academy.

"Quite," was his short answer.

"How do you know?" they asked, anxiously.

"Because Uncle George took me yesterday to introduce me to Mr B——, who is to be my master."

The twins looked at each other with disappointed countenances. Hugh, taking for granted his part was over, was turning to leave the room, when George stopped him.

"Stay a minute, can't you, Hugh!" he said, half-crossly. "What is the use of being in such a hurry? I say, Edward, it might do yet, if Hugh would only say to papa, that he should like it. Could you say that, Hugh?"

"Say what? Like what?" Hugh asked, impatiently.

The mysteriousness of their words and manner provoked him, eager as he was to return to Kenneth.

"Say that you should like better to go to Dr S——'s academy, than to the other."

"No," said Hugh, very shortly, "I could not."

"Oh, well, just as you please," George answered, in an offended tone. "Only I'll take care to tell our friends among the boys what a disobliging fellow you are."

"You may do about that as you like, I am not going to tell lies to please anybody," was the proud rejoinder.

"Tell lies! Who asked you to tell lies?"

"You did."

"I did! What do you mean by that impertinence?" And George advanced towards him with threatening gestures.

Edward interposed.

“Tut, George, leave him alone,” he said, pushing his brother aside. “And you, Hugh, tell us why you suppose we wish you to tell lies?”

“You wish me to say that I should like Dr S——’s school better than the Academy, while I am really very anxious to go to the Academy rather than to any other school.”

“But we did not know that,” said Edward. “We supposed you did not care where you went. We could not know you wished to go to the Academy.”

There was so much reason in this that Hugh had nothing to say in answer ; but when George pursued their advantage further, by saying in a lofty tone, that Hugh had no right to suppose they could wish him to tell a lie, Hugh replied with much heat—

“I had every reason, because I see how ready you are to tell lies yourselves.”

“We ready to tell lies !” they both exclaimed, angrily, “What do you mean? Do you think we are going to stand that?”

“I do not care whether you stand it or not—it is the truth. The only reason you wish to go to Dr S——’s, is because your friend Burke is there. And you mean to tell my uncle that you wish to go because there are good masters there, and because there are some classes taught there which you wish to attend.”

The brothers were evidently taken aback by the ex-

tent of Hugh's information, and were silent for a minute. George was the first to recover himself, and he asked, with affected carelessness, how Hugh knew what they meant or wished.

"Oh, I have heard you talking—I can put that and that together as well as other people."

"You think yourself mighty clever, I suppose," answered George. "But I can tell you you have put rather too much together, if that is what you make out. We never meant to tell papa a lie. We meant to tell him that Mr Robertson had gone to Dr S——'s. And papa likes him, and thinks him the best teacher of Greek he ever knew. And we meant to tell him that we wished to attend drawing and natural history classes, and so we do, and there are none in the Academy. We meant to tell papa all this. But we never said we meant to give these as the reasons of our wish to leave the Academy."

"You meant Uncle George to believe these were your reasons, and they were not," Hugh persisted, warmly.

"Oh, for that," with a slight laugh, "if he chooses to think these are our reasons, that is his business. It is not ours."

"Yes, it is yours," Hugh returned, with great energy. "It is every one's business to see that what they say is taken for what they mean. To plan and plot how you can make my uncle think you mean one thing, when you do really mean another, is as bad as to tell a lie, if

it is not worse. Indeed, I think a lie is the more manly thing of the two."

"And you are quite right, Hugh, it is the more manly of the two."

The three boys started, and looked round. Mr Grahame had been attracted by the sound of angry voices as he came down-stairs, and had come in in time to hear Hugh's last speech.

"In what did you intend to deceive me?" he asked sternly of his sons.

They made no answer, but stood with their eyes fixed on the ground. He turned to Hugh. "You, at least, can answer me," he said.

"No, uncle, I cannot. They told me in confidence. I have no right to repeat what they said," he answered at once, looking frankly up at his uncle.

"But I command you to tell me what you know," Mr Grahame said, very peremptorily.

"But, uncle, you have no right to command me to do wrong," was the bold answer. "But the boys will tell you themselves. Do, Edward," and he sprang across the room and took Edward's hand. He had seen at a glance that his only chance of success lay with Edward. George looked sullen. But in his brother's countenance there were unmistakable signs of real sorrow for his fault. Hugh passed his arm affectionately round his neck, while he exhorted and encouraged him to a full confession.

"Speak up like a man," he said, earnestly, "and tell my uncle everything. It was very wrong. But you are sorry now; and the only thing you can do is to confess all bravely. He is going to tell you himself, uncle. Come, Edward, begin at once. The beginning is the worst."

And thus urged, Edward did begin in a low, hesitating voice.

They liked Burke very much, he said, and were very sorry that their father did not like him, and that they could see so little of him. They knew that their father would not allow them to have him at their house, nor allow them to go to his. And Burke had persuaded them to try and get their father to send them to the school he was to attend; and they had thought he might be willing to allow them, when he knew Mr Robertson was there.

"And you meant to conceal from me that Burke would be your class-fellow?" Mr Grahame asked, sternly.

Edward's "Yes" was barely audible.

"And do you mean to say you laid this plan *after* what I said to you yesterday? When I had trusted to your honour, could you mean to deceive me? Answer me, Edward. Did you hold to your purpose in spite of my positive commands?"

He spoke in his sternest tones, and Edward made no reply. Again Hugh interposed in his unceremonious manner.

“Come, uncle,” he said, “it is not fair to speak in that way now. Think how hard it is for him to speak out at all. It is not fair to make it harder. But never mind, Edward, take heart, and tell the whole truth. That is the only right way. Help him, uncle. Ask the question again, and he will answer you.”

Apparently Mr Grahame did not choose to obey Hugh’s dictation, for he remained silent, and Hugh was obliged to be prompter himself.

“My uncle wants to know whether you kept to your purpose after he had forbidden you to associate with Burke,” he said, encouragingly. “Come, Edward, speak it out ; just a little yes, or no.”

“Yes.”

There was a long silence. Mr Grahame walked up and down the room, looking very grave and stern. The boys waited anxiously for his sentence. In Edward this anxiety was mingled with real sorrow for his fault, but in George with a kind of sullen defiance. His father might punish him as he chose, he could bear it. They had a right to choose their own friends. If his father would not allow them to associate with Burke in an open, honest way, he must expect that they would seek underhand means of doing so. And with such thoughts he increased the hard, rebellious feelings in his heart. At last Mr Grahame turned to them.

“I have no right to punish a mere intention,” he said, “however much I may condemn it. As you have been

prevented carrying yours into effect, although through no merit in you, I must leave the punishment to the working of your own consciences. At the same time, you must understand that you have altogether destroyed my confidence in your truthfulness and honour. Hush, Hugh," he added, authoritatively, as Hugh began to plead for his cousins, "you must interfere no further. Your pleading is useless. To give, or take away my confidence is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. I *cannot* trust in those who are not trustworthy. For this reason," turning again to his own boys, "I have to desire that you come with me to my room, and write, to my dictation, a letter to Burke, telling him that you shall henceforth hold no communication with him, unless he can clear himself from those charges which occasioned his expulsion from the Academy. As I cannot trust to your honour, I must raise such a barrier between you and this boy as even you cannot pass over. His influence over you has been even worse than I had feared. My only hope is, that perhaps the companionship and example of this boy," and he laid his hand kindly on Hugh's shoulder, "may do you good. He has shown himself a noble contrast to you. His words, his manner, the expression of his face, show that truth is to him a sacred thing, that his every word may be believed, may be taken without question in its full and honest meaning."

Never had Hugh listened so reluctantly to his own

praises. They seemed to him so mis-timed. He slipped from under his uncle's hand as soon as he could, and ran out of the room and up to Kenneth.

Of course the whole scene was related to him. He fully shared in Hugh's condemnation of George and Edward. He and Hugh had been trained to habits of the most inflexible truthfulness. Independently of religious principle, they looked upon deceit as the most base and cowardly of vices, and one which no brave man could ever practise. So great was their detestation of it, that they could perceive no distinction between lesser and greater degrees of falsehood. Whatever was not strictly true was to them a lie, and to be shunned and hated accordingly. As Hugh had said, they believed it to be every man's duty to see that his words were taken for what they really meant; and even carelessness in this respect seemed to them a sin. Kenneth was as much shocked as Hugh had been, to find that their cousins could deliberately plan how they could best deceive their father. And as his pity and sympathy had not been stirred, as Hugh's had been, by the painful scene through which the offenders had passed, he felt even more contempt for, and honest indignation against them, than his more vehement and excitable brother.

Hugh soon passed on to speak his thoughts of his uncle's behaviour.

"O Kenneth," he cried, vehemently, "Uncle George made a thorough bungle of the whole business."

"Why, Hugh," Kenneth answered, laughing; "do you think you know better than Uncle George how he should treat his boys?"

"I know what papa would have done; and I can see which way is best. You know, Kenneth, in all papa's dealings with us, in his laying his commands upon us, reproving, punishing, or advising, we felt—we could not help feeling—that what he wished was to make us obedient children to God. And all he did was to help us in that—to make the right thing more easy, the wrong thing more difficult. Now, with Uncle George it was only they had disobeyed *his* orders, they had tried to deceive *him*,"—trying to imitate his uncle's stern dignity of manner. "And he was so full of that, he could not see how much Edward was feeling, and how hard it was for him to speak out. It was cruel to make it harder. And he did make it harder to a boy like Edward. If it had been me, I could not have borne to be spoken to so harshly. It would have made me proud and angry; and I would have thrown back my head, looked him full in the face, and said, 'Yes, I did,' as loudly and as clearly as I could."

"It is to be hoped, then, that you and Uncle George may never have a quarrel," Kenneth remarked, drily. "You would not get on very comfortably by your own account."

"No; I don't think we should. I don't like his way of doing things at all. And then it was a shame, when

they were so humbled and sorrowing, to tell them he had lost all confidence in them."

"I don't see how he could help that. One cannot force one's self to feel confidence in people who tell lies. And I don't see that one ought if one could."

"Oh, but if he had considered, he might have seen that poor Edward was so bowed down with real sorrow and shame, that there was really little chance of his doing the same thing again. Indeed, I think there is a better chance of his being truthful now than before. He cannot soon forget to-day."

"Well, I must say, boys who could plan such deceit do not deserve to have any one trust them," Kenneth said, decidedly.

"Oh, you know, although I was very sorry for Edward, I do not mean to say it was not a shameful, a hateful thing. Only I think Uncle George did not deal with it rightly. And to think of his praising me at such a time, and bidding them take example by me. It was enough to make them hate me. And his praise was absurd too. How did Uncle George know that I might not just have done the same thing?"

"Hugh, you could not," Kenneth exclaimed, vehemently.

"I do not think I could. But Uncle George had no reason to know that. It was easy enough for me to say fine things about telling the truth, when I had no temptation to tell a lie. But for all he knew I might have

been as ready to go wrong as they were, if I had been tempted. And, at any rate, what was the use of praising me then. It could only make the boys dislike me. And, unfortunately, they do that at any rate."

"I don't see why they should dislike you. I am sure you have given them no reason," Kenneth interrupted, as if indignant at the bare thought of any one disliking his Hugh.

"Ah, but I see too much reason why they should. Why, Kenneth, I was abominably cross this morning."

"It was right, quite right to be angry with such boys," was the energetic reply.

"Only, unfortunately, it was before I knew what wrong things they were about that I was cross," Hugh said, with a half smile. "You see, Ken dear, I was cross and impatient because I wanted to get back to you, and I let my temper get the better of me, and made them feel so towards me as I am afraid I shall not soon be able to make them forget. It was a bad business altogether. And, oh, how shall we ever get on with these fellows as companions, and Uncle George and Aunt Jane for our managers. It is woful. Why could not we have been sent to dear, good Uncle John?"

"Why, Hugh," Kenneth said, with a smile. "I am afraid that would not have done very well. Uncle John and Aunt Lucy would have been too kind. It might have done well enough if we had been sensible grown-

up young men going to college, who knew how to keep themselves in order. But young chaps, like you and me, are the better of a little help in that matter, and we were not likely to get it from Uncle John and Aunt Lucy. They have no children, and don't know much about their wildnesses, and all that. They think us all pretty nearly perfect."

"Why then could not we stay at dear, darling Birkenholme; I am sure grandpapa and grandmamma knew well how to manage us. What was the use of our coming to this hateful town."

"Come, come, Hugh, you are forgetting your own lesson of last night. You are getting like Joshua."

"No, I am not," he said, instantly recovering his good humour. "I am worse than Joshua; I am more like the Israelites, when they murmured for the fleshpots of Egypt. Yesterday I grumbled because I was afraid I could not be good here. But to-day it is only because I am afraid I shall not be comfortable. So let us have done with that grumbling now, I shall not say a word, or make a face, although I have to go out with Aunt Jane this afternoon, to be introduced to hundreds of new aunts and cousins."

"Hundreds! O Hugh."

"Dozens then," laughing, "or half-dozens. It is bad at the best. Fancy going out to walk with Aunt Jane, going from drawing-room to drawing-room to see new people, and play the civil, and have her saying after

every visit, 'You ought to have said this,' or 'you ought to have done that,'—oh, oh."

"And this you call giving over grumbling," Kenneth remarked, slyly.

"It is more groaning than grumbling, Master Ken. However, here is our book of engravings, let us get to them. We are safe from grumbling or groaning there."

They had scarcely opened the book, when Kenneth's kind physician, Dr Hill, came in. He pronounced his patient almost well, and allowed him to get up and go down-stairs. Hugh was glad to get Kenneth down-stairs with him to keep him out of mischief, as he said. And yet he looked back upon the quiet room with a little sigh.

"It was a harbour of refuge to me," he said; "and where or when shall I again get you so comfortably to myself."

The afternoon's visiting was less disagreeable than he had feared. Besides Elizabeth, one of the nursery party went with them—a nice little girl, about the age of Hugh's sister Julia. Hugh devoted himself to her while Mrs and Miss Grahame walked together. * He had a happy art of entertaining children, and soon won the little Jane's heart. And, in pleasing her, he was well pleased himself.

Besides the expected happiness of seeing Aunt Lucy, he had the unexpected one of making acquaintance with

a new aunt, who proved quite to his taste. This was his Aunt Grace—his mother's only sister. She was like Mrs M'Leod in manner and appearance, and this likeness was in itself enough to make her attractive to Hugh. Then she received him with such cordiality—said she had remained at home all the previous day expecting that he and Kenneth would call—that if she had known sooner Kenneth was ill, she would have gone to see them, and asked after every member of the dear Birkenholme family with such affectionate particularity, that the warm heart of the boy was completely won.

She had three daughters, with whom Hugh was also greatly pleased. They were all older than his own sisters. But he fancied that they were exactly like what Lizzie and Kate would be when they were grown up. They showed a most flattering desire to know all about Lizzie and Kate, and received the brother's glowing description of their merits with full faith and ready sympathy. In short, Mrs Lindsay's house was more like home in Hugh's eyes than he could ever have believed any place but Birkenholme could be.

Mrs Lindsay had an only son, about the age of Percival Grahame; but Hugh did not see either him or his eldest uncle, Mr Hugh Grahame, who, being a bachelor, had lived with Mrs Lindsay ever since her husband's death, many years before.

Hugh's "half-dozens of new aunts" really consisted of

this Aunt Grace, and an Aunt Margaret, the wife of Edward, the youngest son of Birkenholme. She was a very pleasant, warm-hearted woman, and welcomed Hugh with the greatest kindness. But, as Hugh told Kenneth in confidence, her kindness was not much to his taste.

“The more kind Aunt Grace was to me,” he said, “I felt all the more anxious to do everything I could to please her. But Aunt Margaret’s fussing only fidgeted me, and made me feel cross and rude. Aunt Grace and her girls, and Uncle John and Aunt Lucy, are all of our new relations I ever care to see again.”

Mr Edward Grahame’s family were all young, the eldest boy being rather younger than Hugh. He was a clever boy, well advanced in lessons for his age, and attended the same class in the Academy as his three elder cousins, George, Edward, and Hugh. But Hugh did not see him, as he was visiting some of his mother’s relations, and was not to be in Edinburgh until the day before the school session began.

“A sensible plan,” Hugh pronounced, “much better than Uncle George’s absurd fancy of bringing us in nearly a week sooner than it is at all necessary. That we may get time to be accustomed to the new state of things forsooth. As if ten weary months were not enough to accustom us to anything we are likely to meet with.”

The younger children of Edward Grahame were, he

thought, amusing enough, and very pretty, but terribly spoiled, and he could not help thinking that after all his grumbling, he should like better to be domineered over by Aunt Jane, than to be petted and spoiled by Aunt Margaret.





CHAPTER VI.

OBEDIENCE.



AT tea-time Mr Grahame told Hugh he wished to speak to him alone in his own room.

“Very well, uncle; when you are ready I am,” was his prompt answer.

He felt neither anxiety nor alarm at the summons, although it had been somewhat formally and gravely made. He was not conscious of having done anything to merit rebuke. And if his uncle wished to question him further about George and Edward's affair, as he fancied might be the case, why, there was nothing more to tell. So he went down-stairs with his uncle, with a heart perfectly at ease; more at ease, in truth, than was his uncle's at that moment.

Mr Grahame was a shy man, shy more by habit than by nature. From peculiar circumstances, he had been sent from home at an early age to a small private boarding-school. Among the six or seven boys, of which the school consisted, there was not one with whom he cared

to be intimate. The master was a stiff, formal man, who had little sympathy with, little understanding of, the boy nature of his young scholars. He took care that they should attend well to their studies, and make due progress in them, and that their outward conduct should be correct. But of the inner world of their hearts he thought little. The young Grahame, ardent, but over-sensitive by nature, finding none to understand him, gradually learned to keep his inmost thoughts and feelings shut up in his own breast, and to live apart from his companions, in a companionship with himself. His returns home at the vacations broke in upon this habit of reserve, but were too short and infrequent to destroy it. And after he settled in Edinburgh, the duties of his profession prevented his going to Birkenholme oftener than once a year, and that for only a week or two; and, for the last three or four years, even this had been unattainable. Had he married a lively, open-hearted woman, he might have regained the frankness and sociability of his early life. But the stillness and reserve of his wife's character had infected him, and year by year he became more grave and silent. This reserve, which was more of manner than of character, made him appear stern, and unapproachable to his children. Except Percy, who had a knack of finding his way into people's hearts, and winning them to confidence, none of them understood how tenderly he loved them. To all he showed more of the authority than of the affection of a

father. He was quite conscious that his manner was stern, and it was this consciousness which made him doubtful of the result of his proposed conversation. He liked Hugh's frank confidence, and was most anxious to do nothing to destroy it. But he greatly doubted his own power of maintaining such a pleasant friendly tone as might make Hugh feel quite at ease with him.

He was much interested in both his nephews. Like all the Grahames, he had strong family affections. His sister was as dear to him now in India as ever she had been in the days of their constant companionship at Birkenholme. And for her sake, he earnestly desired the welfare and happiness of her boys. Aunt Jane resolved to look well after the boys, and keep them in order, from a sense of duty, perhaps from a little love of power. But with Uncle George, such resolution was the fruit of a real fatherly desire for their well-doing.

Hugh gave his uncle a little time to arrange how he should begin their talk. So soon as they got into Mr Grahame's room, the boy seeing a bust of his grandfather, sprang forward to it with eager exclamations of pleasure, and questions as to when, where, and how it had been taken. Mr Grahame allowed him to satisfy his curiosity and his affection, by a full examination of the kind, good face, so dear to him, and then he called him to his side. Hugh obeyed the summons with all alacrity. Mr Grahame was seated in a large arm-chair,

and made room for the boy to sit beside him, and put his arm kindly round him.

“Hugh,” he said, “I think you are a sensible little fellow, and I wish to have a little rational conversation with you.”

Hugh drew himself up, and looked pleased with the compliment. His uncle continued—

“Do you remember what you said to me this forenoon, when I asked you how George and Edward had meant to deceive me?”

“Yes, uncle,” Hugh answered readily, “I said I did not think it would be right for me to tell you, and that you had no right to bid me do what was wrong.”

“Well, Hugh, do you think it was quite right to speak to me in that way?”

Hugh looked up with so much surprise in his face, that, in order to bring the matter more clearly home to him, his uncle changed the form of the question, and asked him if he should have thought it right to speak to his father in that way.

“Ah, but,” said Hugh, with his own peculiar look, half impudent, half shy, “papa would never have asked me to do a wrong thing.”

Mr Grahame could not repress a smile.

“You are an impudent fellow, Hugh,” he said. “But, to be serious—suppose your father, not understanding the true state of the case, were to desire you to say, or

do something you thought wrong, would you speak to him as you spoke to me to-day?"

"No, I should not, Uncle George. Papa would not allow me. He always says, that as God has commanded us to 'honour our father and mother,' so it is his duty to see that we do honour him. And he says, that to honour any one, is not merely to have respect for them in our hearts, but to show it in our outward manner."

"You feel, then, Hugh, that you did not speak respectfully to me to-day; you did not speak as you should have done to your father?"

"No, I did not," Hugh said, decidedly. "But even to papa I should not have betrayed confidence. I should have explained to him how the matter stood, and have asked him to excuse me from telling him what I thought I ought not to repeat."

"Then do you see now, Hugh, that you ought not to have answered me as you did."

Again Hugh looked up with his roguish smile.

"But, uncle, you are not papa."

Again Mr Grahame could not preserve his gravity, but he shook his head.

"Ah, Hugh," he said, "you know pretty well you are in the wrong. I stand to you just now in the place of your father. He has given you into my charge. I am bound to keep you in order; and you must feel that you are bound to submit to my authority."

"There is something in that," Hugh remarked, as if

gravely weighing the matter. He was evidently not inclined to accept his uncle's opinions without due consideration.

"I think there is a great deal in it," Mr Grahame rejoined. "And I think, further, that I have other claims to your respect. There may be a great deal of talent, ay, even of sense, in this small brain," laying his hand kindly upon Hugh's head; "but there cannot be much experience, not much acquired knowledge. I must be supposed to be your superior in wisdom, at least, and as such entitled to respect."

"Yes, yes, I see that," Hugh answered, readily. "And you are my superior in age. Papa and mamma always required us to treat our elders with respect. They said that the Bible required us to do so. And, Uncle George, you are my superior also in position; you are the head of the family; I am only one of the smallest of its parts."

"You are quite convinced, then, that you ought to treat me more respectfully than you did this morning."

"Yes, I am, uncle," looking up at him with his honest frankness. "I spoke to you, I treated you as if you were just a boy like myself. I am sorry; I beg your pardon."

"I do not wish you to be less frank with me, my dear Hugh. I like you to speak your mind freely. But I think you can do that without being disrespectful.—Eh, Hugh?"

"Oh, yes ; I know I can. I speak out everything to papa just as I think it. And yet, as I told you, he never suffers me to be in the slightest degree disrespectful."

"Well, that matter being settled, I wish to make a kind of compact with you," Mr Grahame continued, in a friendly tone. "You quite acknowledge that as the head of the house I ought to exercise authority over you, as well as over the other members of my family. You do not think that you are able to govern and direct yourself, do you?"

"Ah, no, indeed, uncle ; I should never get on at that work," he answered, heartily.

"And if some one must govern you, and I am the right person to do it in your present circumstances, you must feel that it will make you happier to submit cheerfully to my authority."

"Yes ; I do. It is a miserable thing to be always fighting against those who are ruling us. It is far pleasanter to submit at once. And, besides, it is right."

"Well, I am glad you have the sense to feel this. Now, our compact shall be, that you shall promise to obey me pleasantly and cheerfully. And I promise to treat you like the rational boy you have shown yourself to be, and always to try to convince you of the reasonableness of my commands."

Percy had come into the room a minute or two before

to consult his father about a business letter he required to answer, and he now joined in the conversation.

“My dear father,” he said, smiling, “you must excuse me ; but I do not think that is the way to deal with a boy like Hugh. You will spoil him.”

“But I like to be dealt with in that way,” Hugh said, warmly, turning round upon Percy ; “and what kind of boy am I that I am to be spoilt by rational, kind treatment.”

“You are a kind of a boy who flames up very quickly at the least offence or suspicion of an offence,” Percy answered, laughing.

Hugh had recovered his temper as quickly as he had lost it. His only reply was a good-humoured nod, and an arch, half-ashamed smile.

“At all events, he is a boy who cools down again rapidly,” Mr Grahame said, kindly laying his hand upon Hugh’s shoulder, while he looked at Percy.

“But, Cousin Percy,” Hugh urged, “you have not answered me. What kind of a boy do you think me?”

“A proud rebellious kind of boy who does not yet know the worth of obedience, and who must learn to know it, if he is ever to be the great man he wishes to be.”

“Oh, as for that, obedience is a virtue of course ; but I don’t much think it is a virtue a great man has much to do with.”

“I thought as much,” Percy said, drily.

Hugh went on without heeding him.

"I think a brave resistance is more like a great man than a tame obedience."

"I thought as much," Percy repeated; "you are not old enough or wise enough to know that there is a brave as well as a tame obedience. That resistance often comes from weakness, not from strength."

The compassionate, almost contemptuous manner in which this was spoken, irritated Hugh; his cheek flushed, and his eye kindled. But he was really anxious to know what Percy meant, and, restraining his anger, he said, eagerly—

"But tell me, Cousin Percy, would you tamely submit to the oppression of an unreasonable tyrannical ruler?"

"A great deal would depend upon the man's right to rule me. I should not feel inclined to obey every man who might take it into his head to lay his commands upon me."

"Oh, but I mean really a lawful ruler, a master, or—or—" with a glance at his uncle, "a father."

"If God had in His providence put me under the authority of any man, however unreasonable he might be, so long as he required from me nothing wrong. I should think it my duty to use all the strength of mind, and all the courage God had given me, so to master my own will, as that I might be able to obey his, because in obeying him I should obey God who set him over me."

“True,” said Hugh, thoughtfully; “I did not think of that; I think that would be a brave, noble obedience.”

“And,” Percy pursued, “if I resisted his will only, because I could not resist my own, or because I was afraid others might misunderstand my obedience, and despise me for it, then my resistance would be weak and cowardly, not strong and brave.”

“Yes, yes, I see; papa has often said that it is worse to be the slave of our own will than the slave of another’s. And he must be a poor creature who cannot master himself. Certainly he could not be one of our great men, Cousin Percy.”

Mr Graham had listened to the short dialogue with interest, watching Hugh’s expressive face.

“So, Hugh,” he said, “you wish to be a great man?”

“Wish to be! I mean to be one, Uncle George,” was the prompt answer, as Hugh turned quickly to him with a glowing look of proud resolution.

“If you can, Hugh.”

“But I can, uncle. Papa says that a great man is he who gives his whole heart to do the best thing in the best way. And Kenneth says that every one can do that.”

“And both papa and Kenneth are right, my boy,” said Mr Grahame, rising to attend to the business upon which Percy wished his opinion. “And you are right, very right to aim so high, so decidedly.”

Mr Grahame left the room. Hugh sat still, looking

thoughtfully into the fire. He thought himself alone, and started when Percy laid his hand on his shoulder. Percy smiled.

"May I know the subject of these deep thoughts—the cause of those long sighs?" he asked.

"Why, Cousin Percy," Hugh answered, looking up at him with a comical smile, "it might not do exactly to tell you. I was thinking about my chances of happiness here. And as this is your home, it might not be quite proper to tell you what I have decided they are."

"Your doubt about the propriety of telling me, as well as your many sighs, make me guess you think your chance small; I am sorry you think so."

"Why, you see, Percy, there are my lessons," beginning with what Percy's relations had least to do with. "If you only knew how I hate lessons. And yet, Kenneth says that it is only right to learn them as perfectly as possible; that it is only what we must do, if we mean to do the work God has given us to do. Then you see that means quite perfectly. For, of course, one can learn perfectly if one only take time and trouble enough"—and Hugh drew another deep sigh.

"Why, Hugh, you seem sorry to be able to learn lessons perfectly," Percy said, laughing.

"Not sorry because I am able, Cousin Percy; but sorry to think of the time and trouble—the horrible trouble of doing it. If only I might stop a little short of perfection. But it would not be right. I must do

heartily with *all* my heart whatever God gives me to do. Then there are George and Edward. I don't like them, and they don't like me. And Aunt Jane! oh, dear!" he had by this time forgotten Percy's relationship to the parties named. "Of all the disagreeable, provoking rulers a poor boy ever had, Aunt Jane is the worst. And yet I must make myself obey her."

"My dear Hugh," Percy began, gravely, "I might comfort you by saying what is the truth, that neither my brothers nor my mother are what you suppose"—

"O Percy, I forgot," poor Hugh interrupted him, blushing up to the roots of his hair.

"But I think there is a better way to comfort you," Percy continued, only noticing the interruption by a kind encouraging nod and smile. "Tell me, Hugh, do you mean to make it the business of your life to make yourself as happy as you can?"

"No, indeed, Percy," he said, warmly. "No great man is ever selfish. No great man ever makes his own happiness his first end."

"You are right, Hugh. Every truly great man makes it the one business of his life to serve God to the utmost of his ability, and leaves God to provide for his happiness as He thinks best."

"I like that. I like to hear you speak in that way, so earnest, so true," Hugh said, rising, that he might the better see Percy's kindling face.

"And do you further believe, Hugh, that God, from

day to day, and from hour to hour, gives you just the service He wishes you to do?"

"Yes, I do, Percy," was the undoubting answer.

"Then if it be the business of your life to serve God, and if you are content that He should appoint the service you are to do, is it not a pity to waste time and strength in vain wishes that it were different, vain regrets that it is what God has made it?"

"Time I may have wasted, Percy, but I don't see how I have wasted strength," Hugh answered, doubtfully.

"Why! Hugh, after you have brooded for half-an-hour over the disagreeableness of obeying your aunt, or of bearing with your cousins' humour, would you be as able to obey or to bear as before you began this same brooding?"

"No, Percy, I should not," he answered, frankly. "And it is a poor-spirited thing to wish, and grumble, and all that, instead of rising up like a man to do our work."

"Now, one word about the disagreeables themselves. Believe me, Hugh, my brothers are not so bad as you think."

"Ah, Percy, it is easy to speak," Hugh answered, shaking his head, "but I know better."

"What! know my brothers better than I do, Hugh?" Percy asked, smiling. "You have known them two days, I, fourteen years."

"Oh, of course I did not quite mean I knew them

better than you," Hugh answered again, blushing deeply, "only I know they are not to my taste."

"And I only wish that you should not be too sure they are not to your taste until you know them better. I know you have not as yet seen anything in them to like. I do not at all mean to defend their fault of to-day. Perhaps you can hardly understand how deeply it has grieved me. But I think they were not fully aware of what they were doing. Burke can really make himself most attractive. The two boys love him most truly, far better than he deserves. His bad example and bad advice have, I am afraid, injured their sense of right; but I hope this is only a temporary injury. Their eyes have been opened, and I do not think you will again see such behaviour in either of them."

"Oh, you know, Percy, I was quite sorry for Edward, and do not at all mean that I can never like him," Hugh said, with an unconscious emphasis on the last word.

"And Edward is quite a boy that any one, that you, Hugh, can like, can love. He is very affectionate, and has much unselfishness and kindliness of heart. From indolence, he often suffers himself to be led into wrong things. But he has more strength of character than you can perhaps just now believe. And even George," he added with a smile, "I am unwilling to give up to your dislike. Believe me, there is good in him you do not see. Do not make up your mind about him until you have seen more of him. That is all I ask."

"I shall try, Cousin Percy; but I know I am always in a hurry to make up my mind. Grandmamma says it is quite one of my faults."

"And my mother, Hugh," Percy went on. Hugh interrupted him in real distress.

"O Percy, I am so ashamed of having said what I did say. I quite forgot she was your mother."

"I saw you did, dear Hugh. I was not at all offended. But for her you must allow me to say, that though her manner may be more peremptory than you quite like, you will never meet with injustice from her, and that assurance ought to satisfy you. A really manly boy ought to be able to make up his mind to disagreeable things without grumbling. And although my mother may now and then interfere with your liberty more than you quite like, it will never be for the mere sake of interfering. Trust me she has always good reasons for what she does, although she may not think proper to explain those reasons to you."

"And you have said that it is better for me not to have them explained," Hugh said, laughing. "I have not forgotten that hard sentence."

"If you are to learn obedience, Hugh, you must be called upon to obey commands of which you do not quite see the use. If you only obey when you are convinced it is for your own good to do so, you obey your own reason, not the will of your governor."

“Well, surely I can make myself be obedient. That does not seem so very hard a task.”

“The hardest you are called upon to do, my dear Hugh. Believe me, obedience is no easy work to a boy like you. It is the work God has given you just now. But, believe me, you will require God’s strength to help you to do it.”





CHAPTER VII.

REBELLION.

AND Hugh had only too soon reason to see that Percy was right.

The boys went to school in the beginning of the following week. Kenneth was by that time quite well. They both liked school better than they had hoped. The novelty, bustle, and excitement were quite to their taste. They made some pleasant acquaintanceships. For their cousin, Hugh Grahame, they both conceived a warm affection. Edward grew more amiable in their eyes every day; and even George was more agreeable at school than at home, because among other boys he considered it a point of honour to uphold and help Hugh as a part of his own family. Altogether, the playground at the academy was a scene of new and exciting pleasure; and even to Hugh the school-room was more tolerable than he had fancied. He was in some branches of study far advanced for his age. His lessons were no great burden to him; and as he was a

very quick boy, when he had once got accustomed to the noise and bustle, which had at first confused him, he rose rapidly in his class, and grew so eager to rise as to find it comparatively easy to be diligent in preparing his lessons.

At home they had every convenience for study which they could desire. A large room behind the drawing-room was given up to their use for play-room and school-room. One end was partitioned off, making a roomy closet for the reception of all their bats, traps, balls, &c. Convenient book-shelves were ranged round the room, and each boy had his own shelf. In the middle of the room stood a large solid mahogany table, where a dozen boys might write or draw at once, without inconveniencing each other. It was an old table which Mr Grahame had bought at a sale, and its whole appearance,—the strong legs coming straight down from the four corners, without a thought of grace, or of anything beyond taking a firm hold of the ground, its massiveness making it difficult to move, nearly impossible to shake or overthrow,—all told of its having been made for just such a post as it now occupied; while the notches round its edges spoke of numerous knives whose sharpness it had served to test; and the circles, half-circles, squares, triangles, and lines of every kind and size, wherewith its once bright surface was scored, spoke equally plain of the many idle students who had learned their lessons by its side. On each side were two capacious drawers, one

for each of the four proprietors of the room, in which they were expected to keep their writing materials,—a slate, with slate-pencil and sponge duly attached, a lead pencil, a reasonable stock of common writing paper for school use, a smaller stock of finer paper for letters, pens, and ink in a bottle which would not overturn. Aunt Jane had taken due care that every appliance they could require should be provided, and she was equally careful to see that all such appliances were properly used, and properly preserved. No playthings were to be kept in the drawer, or on the book-shelf appropriated to more important matters, and no lesson-book was ever to be thrown down among the mass of playthings the closet contained. Of these rules Hugh was the most frequent transgressor. There was no spirit of order in his nature, and he did not see clearly enough the use of Aunt Jane's rules, to be very solicitous to keep them.

On the second Saturday after they had gone to school, the four boys returned home at the usual Saturday hour of eleven o'clock. They had with them Hugh Grahame, and five or six of their favourite companions. For their Uncle John had promised to take them to the Antiquarian Museum, and had allowed them to invite any of their school-fellows that they chose to go with them. It was a beautiful day, and the party were in high spirits. Kenneth and Hugh had, for their age, an uncommon knowledge of history, and took great delight in it.

There were many things in the Antiquarian Museum which they had long desired to see ; and if the expectations of the other members of the little band were less intelligent, still the expedition was a novelty, something to do, something to see ; and Mr Grahame's pleasant, kindly talk was to be enjoyed at the same time.

The cousins stopped at their own door to deposit their school-books.

"We shall not keep you a minute," Hugh said to a boy who had suggested that if they wasted their time he should see little of the museum, as he was obliged to be home at a certain hour. "We have only to run up-stairs with our books. That bothering Aunt Jane would go into fits if we were to leave them for ever so short a time in the lobby. Here, Kenneth," as the door was opened, "give me your books, I'll take them up for you."

"And mine, too, like a good fellow," "and mine, Hugh," cried his cousins ; and, laden with the four straps, Hugh sprang gaily up-stairs. Mrs Grahame was in the school-room. Without observing her, Hugh flung down his burden in a corner of the room, and was darting off again, when she stopped him, and desired him to take his books out of the strap, and lay them properly away on the shelf.

"But, Aunt Jane, the fellows are waiting for me, and Uncle John will be waiting too," remonstrated Hugh.

"I cannot help it," was the calm, decided answer.

"I cannot suffer you to throw your books on the floor in that way. You have a very bad habit of leaving your things littering about the room ; you must get the better of it."

"Bad habit ! Stuff and nonsense ! Ridiculous humbug !" Hugh muttered, as he turned with a very bad grace to obey her orders.

Academy boys in those days carried their books buckled into the end of a long strap, which they might carry either over their shoulder or round their arm. As the straps, with their loads, were put to many purposes for which they were never intended—now swung violently to and fro, or whirled sling-wise round the head, to ward off assailants too numerous for more regular combat, and again thrown after a retreating enemy, or used as a putting-stone in trials of strength and skill—so it was necessary that the strap should be very firmly fastened. It was a point of honour among the boys to be able to secure their books properly ; and to be mercilessly laughed at was the fate of the luckless boy whose pyramid gave way, even under the most violent usage. Hugh therefore had no such easy task, when he had to unfasten the four tightly buckled-up parcels ; and in his impatience it seemed harder than it was. Perhaps, had his aunt known how much of his burden belonged to the others, she might have excused him from laying aside more than his own. But, unfortunately for Hugh, she was too much occupied to observe what he was doing.

Unfortunate it was, in more senses than one, for she was inspecting the table drawers, and poor Hugh's was in no state to meet her eye. Two or three handfuls of marbles were scattering about; a ball, just as he had taken it from the muddy streets, reposed quietly on the top of his writing paper; the slate was covered with rough pieces of wood, a chisel, hammer, and some nails; and in front of all stood a plate, bedaubed with rubbed-down paint of various colours. The cup which had been used with this plate was also there. It had been at one time nearly full of water; but in Hugh's pullings-out and thrustings-in of his drawer, it had long since parted with its contents, and distributed them with praiseworthy impartiality upon nearly every article the drawer contained.

As Hugh, having laid aside all the books, was preparing again to leave the room, his aunt called him, and, pointing to the drawer, asked him, in a severe tone, if he did not recollect that she had forbidden him to keep anything except his writing materials in it.

Hugh was really ashamed, and answered very humbly, promising to put the whole drawer in order that afternoon.

But the afternoon would not do. He must do it now, his aunt said. Before he left the room every article must be taken out, the writing paper carefully dried, and everything laid smoothly back in its right place.

"But, Aunt Jane," he cried in dismay, "they are all

waiting for me. We are going with Uncle John. Uncle John is waiting; and if we do not make haste, poor Henderson will have no time to see anything."

"I cannot help that, Hugh. They must go without you if they cannot wait. I desire you to put that drawer in perfect order before you leave this room. It is your own fault that you have it to do now. You need say no more," as Hugh began again more indignantly; "it must be done before you leave the room. I must be obeyed;" and she walked away dignified, unmoved as if she had given the most pleasing order possible.

"Must be done!" Hugh muttered, wrathfully, looking after her. "Then I can tell you it shall not be done. I must obey you, must I? I shall not. I am not going to be domineered over in this way. If I choose to keep my drawer in a mess, what business is it of yours? I shall never submit to such interference, I can tell you;" and, seizing his cap, he drew it determinedly down upon his brows, left the room, slamming the door after him, and strode down-stairs and out to the street.

Kenneth, George, and most of the others had walked on, but Edward and Hugh Grahame had waited for him. In answer to their impatient questions and complaints of his delay, he explained in a short, surly manner what had detained him. He had been feeling bitterly against his cousins. They knew their mother's ways; they might have thought he should be obliged to put all the books

away, and it was selfish and unfair to leave him to do it alone.

Edward's ready and hearty "O Hugh, I am so sorry. We should not have given you it all to do," instantly changed the current of his feelings. He saw that he had been unjust, and, putting his arm round Edward's neck in schoolboy fashion, he answered, pleasantly—

"Never mind, old fellow. It signifies little now."

The conviction that he had been unjust to Edward, suggested the question, had he not been unjust to his aunt also? He would not, and did not, entertain it; but it brought another in its train: Had he done quite right to disobey her? Kenneth and Percy had convinced him that it was his duty to obey her as well as his uncle; and that she used her authority severely, even harshly, did not lessen his obligation to do his duty. It was weak and silly to be kept from doing it, only because the fault of another person had made that duty difficult.

He stopped short, and, withdrawing his arm from Edward's neck, said abruptly,

"I can't go on with you. I am going back."

"Going back!" both his cousins cried; "and why? What is the matter?"

"I have something to do which I ought to have done before I came out at all. Don't wait for me. Don't let Uncle John wait. I'll go straight to the museum, and maybe get there before you. And if not," as he

reflected that the paper might not be very quickly dried, "perhaps Uncle John could leave a message with the people at the door, so that they should let me in;" and waiting for no further parley, he darted off, and was presently at home again.

It was not in his nature to conceal a fault. His aunt had forbidden him to leave the room until his drawer was in good order. In this he had disobeyed her; and although he had now returned to make amends for his disobedience, he would have thought it dishonourable to leave her to suppose that no act of disobedience had been committed. It was very disagreeable to confess to a person like his aunt. But it seemed to him so unquestionably necessary to do so that he did not hesitate. He went to the drawing-room, and, going straight up to Mrs Grahame, began at once.

"Aunt Jane, I disobeyed you; I went out without doing anything to the drawer; I have come back to put it right now. I am sorry I did not do it before."

His tone and manner were sufficiently careless and independent; for, in truth, the spirit of rebellion was by no means subdued. He still considered his aunt's interference uncalled for, and her manner of enforcing it harsh and tyrannical. He had returned only because his conscience would not suffer him to go on in comfort, and because he had thought it due to himself to show that he could do his duty manfully, however hard his aunt's oppression might make it. He thought himself

very magnanimous to apologise at all, and had confidently expected that his apology would be received at least graciously, if not kindly. It was not so. His aunt heard him to the end without betraying the least surprise, or even anger, and then said, in her coldest tones,

“I, too, am sorry for your sake, Hugh. Disobedience is a fault I cannot overlook. You must go to the school-room, and remain there until dinner-time. I cannot suffer you to go out with your companions after such an act of disobedience.”

Anger and astonishment kept him silent for a moment or two. His aunt had turned again to her book, and was reading as calmly as if nothing had occurred to interrupt her. Hugh broke forth—

“And do you really think I am going to do anything of the kind? If you do, you are very much mistaken; I have gone just as far in submitting to your tyranny as I think right. Not one step further shall I go, and so I tell you.”

The passionate anger with which he had begun to speak gradually changed into a dogged determination. He threw himself down on a chair, near which he stood, and leaning back and folding his arms, looked round with an air of defiance.

Mrs Grahame did not speak, but rose and rang the bell. A servant came, and she desired him to ask Mr Grahame if he could conveniently come up-stairs for a few minutes to speak to her.

Hugh did not quite like this turn to the affair. He and his uncle had become fast friends. Mr Grahame had taken a great fancy to the frank, fearless boy, and had treated him with an indulgent kindness he had never shown towards his own children. And, grateful for this kindness, proud of feeling himself so much at his ease with one of whom others stood in awe, Hugh had learned to like Uncle George nearly as well as his older friend, Uncle John, and to prize his favour and praise more than Uncle John's, inasmuch as they were more difficult to gain. He half hoped that his uncle might not be at home. But presently his quick, firm step was heard on the stairs. Hugh's heart beat more quickly, although he folded his arms more tightly across his chest, and tried to feel perfectly unconcerned.

Mr Grahame came in. Mrs Grahame told him all that had passed. He turned to his nephew.

"Hugh!" It was all he said. There was more reproach than sternness in his tone, and it went to Hugh's heart. It seemed to remind him of all his uncle's goodness to him, and to ask if his conduct were a proper return for it. There was a softened expression in his eyes as he raised them to his uncle's; but they fell upon his aunt, standing there so cold, so unmoved, and his expression of dogged defiance returned. He shut his lips firmly, and did not speak.

Mr Grahame went up to him and took him by the arm. Hugh obeyed the impulse, rose, and suffered his

uncle to lead him from the room and into the school-room.

“You must remain here, Hugh,” he said, gravely, “for the time your aunt has named. You have openly declared your determination to disobey her, so I shall lock the door upon you, which I should not otherwise have thought of doing. While you are alone I advise you to think seriously of what you are about. I shall expect you, when you are released, to apologise to your aunt for your rebellious conduct, and to promise to submit to her for the future. If you do not, I must write to my father, to say I cannot take charge of you. Your aunt has too many cares and anxieties for me to suffer her to be burdened with a rebellious boy;” and he left the room, locking the door after him.

Hugh threw himself on the floor in a storm of passion. What right had his uncle, had any one, to treat him in that way—to disappoint him of his promised pleasure, to expose him to the curiosity, the pity, perhaps the contempt, of his school-fellows? And all for what? Because he did not choose to be interfered with at every moment, or to submit to be domineered over by any one who chose to try. And did they think they could force him to submit by locking him up? Did they suppose he was a baby, to be afraid to stay in a room by himself? Or did they think he was so anxious for their sweet company as that it was a punishment to him to do without it? And Uncle George threatened to send him

back to Birkenholme? Did they flatter themselves he had ever had the least wish to come to this horrid hole? Did they think it was a pleasure to leave his own dear home, where every one was kind and good, and come among a set of people who had not a whole heart, nor half, nor quarter of a heart, among them? Dear Birkenholme, how happy he had been there! Grandpapa and grandmamma knew how to keep boys in order as well as any one; but they were never like Aunt Jane.

His heart softened a little as he thought of happy Birkenholme, and all who lived there. And it softened still more when he went back to the home of his own father and mother, and recalled their mode of dealing with him. He could only too easily recollect times when he had displeased his papa and mamma; for poor Hugh was one of those boys to whom it is so difficult to keep out of scrapes.

"Ah!" he thought, "how kind, how tender they always were, so grieved that I should do wrong, so grieved that I should have to bear the sorrow of punishment! But as for Aunt Jane," with returning bitterness, "she is a mass of frozen snow. She thinks of nothing but her own authority, her own dignity. And Uncle George expects me to apologise to her, does he? I should like to see myself do it! Why, if Uncle George does not send me away, I'll run away. And if they don't choose to keep me at Birkenholme, I can go out to India. I should not mind a bit working my own way

out in a ship ; and it is just what I'll do rather than submit to Aunt Jane's tyranny."

At this moment he heard the key put into the lock of the door. He sprang to his feet, and began hastily to arrange his dress and smooth his hair, so that he might look quite himself, and might not betray how much he had been agitated. He turned to the fire-place, and stood leaning against the fire-guard. He would not look round when the visitor came in ; but he knew, by the light, timid step, that it was neither his aunt nor uncle.

"Hugh!" said a low voice beside him. It was Elizabeth. There was much kindness in her tone. But Hugh's "Well!" was as surly as it could be.

Elizabeth, shy at all times, and very doubtful of the issue of her present experiment, was too much discouraged to be able to say one word of all she had planned to say. She turned hastily to an indifferent subject. The fire was laid, ready for kindling, and, with a confused mutter about his being cold, she removed the fire-guard, took up the match-box, and applied herself diligently to kindling paper and wood.

Hugh watched her curiously. She was always particular about keeping her clothes nice. She now wore a pretty bright-coloured merino dress, with the extravagantly full sleeves then worn, and white worked muslin cuffs turned over the band of the sleeves ; and as she pushed her match into the grate, and tried to loosen the

paper, which was too firmly packed, her loose sleeves swept the hearth, or the coals, and her white cuffs came against the blackened ribs. Hugh's gallantry could not bear the sight. He forgot his dignified silence.

"Stop a minute!" he cried, "I'll do it. It is no work for you;" and he knelt down, and took the match-box from her hands.

Elizabeth rose, and stood thinking what she should say, and how she could say it, without grieving or offending him.

"Why did you come to light my fire?" he asked, abruptly.

"Because, although the day looks so fine and bright, it is very cold. The thermometer was at freezing this morning," she answered, pleased that he had begun the conversation.

"But why should you come?" he persisted. "Why not send a servant?"

"I thought you might not like a servant to come in," she said, timidly, afraid of hurting his feelings by the allusion to his position.

"Oh, for that I don't care. I am not at all ashamed of being shut up here. I have done nothing to deserve it," he asserted stoutly; at the same time, his violent unscientific pushes and pulls at the paper and sticks, betrayed how much more he cared than he chose to allow.

"But, dear Hugh," Elizabeth said, mustering up all

her courage, "do you think you have done right? Do you not think you are in the wrong?"

"Why, what have I done?" he cried, angrily rising, as his last vigorous shove had brought down the whole mass of coals into the heart of the fire, and put out the last spark of red. "What have I done, I ask?" he repeated, as Elizabeth remained silent. "Only not kept my drawer in apple-pie order, like a fine lady. Pretty schoolboy's work that!"

Elizabeth thought she might have reminded him that the disorder in his drawer was not the cause of his being there, but she had not courage. She had again recourse to the fire. This time she proceeded in a more business-like way. She took off her cuffs, and turned up her sleeves. When Hugh saw her prepare to take up a piece of coal daintily between her pretty little finger and thumb, he went into the closet and brought out a pair of old gloves belonging to Edward. Elizabeth thanked him heartily, drew on the gloves, and set about rearranging coals and wood. She was not very skilful, and constantly her building fell down again as she had nearly completed it, choking up the passages she had left for the admission of air. Hugh watched her with some interest, and began to advise.

"See here, put that long piece of wood right across the grate, and let one end rest on the ribs. Now, it will be strong enough to bear up the others. Ah, that is famous. Now this little round bit of coal. It will

catch fire easily. See how the wood is beginning to burn. We are all right this time."

His good humour had returned in the interest of their united work. And had Elizabeth been his own gentle Lizzie at home, she might now have thrown her arms round his neck, and affectionately pleaded with him not to make them all unhappy by his obstinacy. But Elizabeth had too long held herself aloof from the boys—had too long yielded to her constitutional shyness—to be able to do this. She stood, drawing down her sleeves, and buttoning her cuffs, until the happy moment was past. Hugh had time to recollect his position, and to re-assume his hard, indifferent manner. And the time which Aunt Jane had granted to Elizabeth's earnest entreaties was past. Mrs Grahame's voice was heard calling her.

No one ever ventured to disobey Mrs Grahame's summons. But Elizabeth lingered; and, after she had reached the door, she turned back, and making a great effort, she said, with an earnestness that brought tears into her eyes—

"Dear Hugh, do think of what you are doing. And for Kenneth's sake, for all our sakes, give up to papa."

"For all our sakes? Do *you* care about it, Cousin Elizabeth?" he asked, as if surprised.

"Indeed, indeed, I do," coming nearer to him in her earnestness. "I am very sorry for you, dear Hugh, that you should lose your holiday, and all the more because

you have never been accustomed to be so much confined in school as you now are through the week."

Another and more peremptory "Elizabeth," caused her to stop, and with only a kind and pleading "Do, dear Hugh, give in," she left him.

He sat down beside the fire disconsolate, uncomfortable, but less bitter than before. Elizabeth's visit had softened him. He thought of her kindness in coming. He had a vague idea that it must have cost her a good deal to overcome her shyness so far. And he had a very distinct consciousness that he had deserved no such kindness from her. He had taken a dislike to her at first, and had been at no pains to overcome or conceal it. Remorsefully did he remember the many little offences he had committed against her: how often he had tried to shake the table at which she was writing or drawing—how often trodden on her skirts as he followed her down-stairs—how determinedly squeezed himself up against her as they sat on the sofa together at prayers, because he knew she had a particular dislike to getting her dress crushed. And yet how kind she had looked when she had said she was sorry for him. How considerate to come to light the fire herself, that he might be spared the shame of a servant seeing him in disgrace. How well she had understood his character to know that, "for Kenneth's sake," was the best argument she could use.

"Dear, good old Ken," Hugh soliloquised. "How

vexed he will be. For his sake I could almost make up my mind to give in. If it were only Uncle George, I could. But Aunt Jane! No; she shall never get the better of me."

And to put the thought from him, he started up, and looked round the room for amusement and occupation. He tried to read, but one book after another was laid down. He could not attend. Then it occurred to him that he might as well set the famous drawer to rights. He could not help being vexed when he saw the mischief his carelessness had caused. His writing paper was wet through with dirty paint-stained water, and smeared with mud. Some pretty prints, which he had coloured for the children at home, completely spoilt—a confused mass of red, green, and blue. And above all, was he vexed at the injury done to a neat little memorandum-book which Percy had given him, that he might note down in it the little daily scenes and adventures he wished to recollect for the benefit of the Birkenholme circle. Sorrowfully he dried and smoothed the leaves, and tried to press down the blotches which disfigured the pretty morocco boards where the water had soaked in. He was obliged to throw away his prints, and much of his writing and drawing paper might have shared the same fate.

When he came to the pieces of wood, he recollected that he had procured them for the purpose of making, for one of the Grahames, a cart like those with which he

had often delighted the heart of his own Johnnie. And it occurred to him that to make the cart now might be as good an occupation as any other. He liked the kind of work, for he excelled in it. And in the interest of carrying out an improvement on the old model, time passed pretty quickly. Besides, he rather enjoyed the thought that the noise of his hammer would be heard in the drawing-room, and would convince Aunt Jane that he was perfectly happy and comfortable.

Not even the noisy hammering could prevent him from hearing the sound for which he had all day listened so anxiously, the sound of the boys coming home. He heard the front door shut with a true schoolboy's slam, and then Kenneth's anxious, "Hugh, Hugh! where are you, old fellow?" The anxiety changed into alarm as he got no answer, and met Elizabeth coming to him with so much concern expressed in her face. And Hugh heard a breathlessly eager, "Oh, what has come over Hugh?" There was a low talking, interrupted by George's excited, and, as Hugh thought, exulting questions, and then they seemed all to go into the drawing-room.

"Dear, dear Kenneth," Hugh thought; "how sorry he will be, and how angry with them all. I should not wonder if he gave Aunt Jane a bit of his mind, and let her know we had not come here to be domineered over by her. How I wish I could see him and tell him all, and see how angry he will be. But I suppose they won't

allow him in until dinner-time, and then I don't know what they will do."

He was absorbed in speculations as to his own probable fate, until he should be sent away, and with the thought which now first occurred to him of what he should do without Kenneth at Birkenholme, when he again heard the door unlock, and Kenneth came in. The door was locked after him.

"O Hugh," he cried, "what in all the world have you been about? Was there ever such a fellow for getting into mischief as you are?"

There was only vexation and irritation in his tone. Hugh was most bitterly disappointed. Was this the full, tender sympathy for which he had been longing? He answered very sullenly—

"Well, and what have I been about?"

"Rebelling against uncle and aunt's authority—setting them at defiance," was the decided reply.

"Rebelling against authority!" Hugh repeated, with increased heat, though he tried to speak coolly and contemptuously, "setting at defiance! These are grand words for a very little thing. I only happened to think that I could take care of my own things without Aunt Jane's interference."

"You know as well as I do that is not the business in question," Kenneth answered, sitting down on a chair by the fire, and leaning his head wearily against the mantle-shelf. He had been harassed all day by anxiety

about Hugh. He had not at all enjoyed the visit to the museum. Had scarcely looked at, and had not at all cared about any of the things he had so much wished to see, but had been in a constant fever of anxiety and of desire to get away and see after his missing brother. The questions and conjectures of his companions had annoyed him still more, and he had come home completely worn out and miserable. And then to find the scrape Hugh was in—to see no way of getting him out of it. It was altogether more than his patience could bear.

Hugh stood proudly, indignantly silent. It seemed to him a grievous offence against the spirit of brotherhood, that Kenneth should believe any tale but his—take part with any but him. After an uncomfortable silence of a minute or two's duration, Kenneth raised his head, and asked, moodily—

“What are you going to do now?”

“Nothing,” very decidedly.

“Do you mean to say you are going to make every one unhappy for your whims? What will grandpapa say? Have you no concern for his trouble and annoyance? if you don't care for anything else.”

Hugh made no reply. That his spirited opposition to tyranny should be called “a whim.” His heart swelled with ungovernable anger.

“Well, do you hear me speak to you, Hugh? Why don't you answer me?” Kenneth asked, angrily.

"Because I don't see any right you have to question me. And if you only came here to take that grand master tone, you had better have stayed away, and the sooner you go the better."

"Unfortunately, I cannot go away," Kenneth said, drily. "I was only allowed to come in on condition that I remained with you until you, too, were released."

"That is a pity," was the bitter retort. "It was bad enough to be shut up here alone."

"O Hugh, when did you ever before think it better to be without me?" Kenneth asked, in a softer tone.

"When did you ever before make me think it?" Hugh answered, trying to resist the influence of that softness.

Kenneth felt the justice of the rebuke—felt that he had been very cross and disagreeable—and felt also that it was by kindness alone he could do anything with Hugh. Ever since they had come to town, he had felt very strongly the responsibility of his position with Hugh. He had seen that it was to him alone Hugh looked for comfort or counsel in trouble or difficulty, and that he was inclined to rely upon his advice more fully, and to follow it more implicitly, than he had ever done at home, where he had other counsellors and friends. Kenneth was a serious thoughtful boy. He had fully realised that this influence over Hugh had been given him by God, and been given to be used for God's service, that he might help his brother in the right

way. And yet now he had recklessly thrown away the power God had given him, for the mere pleasure of giving vent to the fretful irritation caused by fatigue and anxiety. Having lost his temper, it was not easy to recover himself; and having once assumed a hard dictatorial tone, it was awkward to return to his usual kind and friendly one. But with the feeling of duty came the recollection of the strength in which alone he could hope to perform it. And while he struggled against the crossness he still felt, he asked God to help him, and to give him the spirit of gentleness and kindness. In a minute or two the victory was won. He rose, and going up to Hugh, who still stood at the table, affecting to be wholly absorbed in fitting in the sides of his cart, he laid his hand on his shoulder, and said—

“Come, Hugh, old fellow, surely you and I are not going to make a quarrel of it.”

There was still a little constraint in his manner; but when Hugh remained silent, and kept his face obstinately turned away, he went on—

“Surely, Hugh, you are not going to quarrel with your own old Ken. I acknowledge I had no right to speak to you in that grand Don Pomposo style. But you must forget it, and be friends, and let us talk the matter over quietly and pleasantly,” and speaking gradually more and more like his own good-humoured self, he gained his point. Hugh looked up to him with a half-reluctant smile, and said—

“Well, well, what do you want to say? Fire away.”

“I only want you to go back to the beginning, and tell me how it all happened. Ah, Hugh,” with a kindly smile and shake of the head, “why can’t you do such a little thing, and obey Aunt Jane’s orders about the drawer?”

“Because,” with some heat, “I don’t see what she has to do with my drawers; I don’t choose to be interfered with.”

“If you were quite honest, you would say you had forgotten the order,” Kenneth said, drily.

A blush, and roguish glance and smile from Hugh, assented to this, and Kenneth continued—

“But, any way, you see all that is nonsense. Aunt Jane has the charge of us. It is her duty to see that we take proper care of our things. Now, listen, Hugh,” as Hugh was about to speak, “if it had been mamma, do you suppose she would have allowed you to toss all your dirty, messing marbles and balls in upon the top of nice clean writing-paper?”

“Why, no,” was the reluctant answer.

“And if she had given you orders to keep one set of things in the closet, and the other set in the drawers, would she not have taken care that you should obey her orders?”

“Oh, well, perhaps she would.”

“And if she had found that you had disobeyed her, in spite of rebukes and reminders, would she not have

given you some little punishment to make you remember better, and obey better?"

"Mamma would never have kept me away from such a long-expected treat as going to the museum," Hugh burst in vehemently, "and have made all the boys wonder at my staying away, and laugh at me."

"She might have sent a pleasant message to us boys, to keep us from waiting or wondering; but I don't feel at all sure that she would not have kept you to put matters right, just to teach you to do better another time."

"But I offered to do it in the afternoon, if only Aunt Jane had not been the most pig-headed, horrid old tyrant . . ."

"But, after all, Hugh," Kenneth interrupted, "you know to put it right in the afternoon would have been no punishment. Twice, at least, in two weeks, Aunt Jane has made you put the drawer in order. You showed her that was not enough to teach you. You forced her to try something more."

"But to keep me from such a treat as the museum!"

"But it would not have kept you if you had set about it at once. You might have got it all right, and been at the museum almost as soon as we were, as we had to go so far round for Uncle John. If you had only done it at once. Why did you not?"

"Oh, it was so hateful, Kenneth," with an impatient twist of his body, "to stay at home sorting drawers on

such a day, to be domineered over by such a frozen piece of goods as Aunt Jane, and to have the boys all laughing at me for a missy and a baby, to be kept at home to sort drawers. Kenneth, I could not."

"And what are you but a missy and a baby, if you cannot do the right thing because it is hard to do, or because this or that person is cross or disagreeable, or because you are afraid of what people may say of you, or call you? Afraid! O Hugh, to be afraid, to be a coward!"

Hugh reddened violently, and turned on his brother with flashing eyes; but Kenneth had leaned his elbow on the table, that he might bring himself down to Hugh's height, and was looking up at him, with so kind and friendly a smile, that Hugh could not keep his anger. He turned away with only an impatient "Bother! Kenneth, how provoking you are;" then suddenly, as if a new thought had struck him, he said,

"It is all very well for you and Percy to speak about obedience being a great man's virtue; but what do you make of all the fine old cocks in Greek and Roman history, or our own William Wallace, or Kate's William Tell? Did not they stand out against tyranny and oppression? And is not that the very reason why we love them?"

"Stuff and nonsense! Don't try that humbug on me," was his only answer.

"It is not humbug," very warmly,

“I tell you it is. Look here, Hugh. Do you suppose William Wallace or William Tell would have made all that row, and brought war and bloodshed on their country, if they had only had their own wrongs to avenge? Don't you see they never could have borne to see all the misery war brought upon so many of their fellow-countrymen, if it had been only to deliver themselves they fought? What great or unselfish end does your resistance serve? You only resist because you have not the strength or courage to make yourself do so disagreeable a thing as yield. If their natures had been so selfish and weak, what could they ever have done?”

“At any rate,” Hugh said, a little sullenly, “although they might not have raised a war for their own wrongs, no power could have forced them to obey a tyrant's unrighteous commands. They would have resisted oppression for themselves, at any rate, and that is all I am doing.”

“Unrighteous commands! Resist oppression! Humbug! Stuff and nonsense!” Kenneth said, impatiently. “Hugh, you tempt me to think you are arguing against your own conviction. You have yourself acknowledged that Aunt Jane bade you do nothing that she had not a right to bid you do. There is no unrighteous commands there. There is no oppression there. There might be a little hardship, perhaps; but what great man would ever refuse to bear a little hardship. Ay, and to bear it cheerfully, too?”

Hugh felt himself unable to answer this argument. All the more unable, as he had tacitly acknowledged its force when he had returned to do his aunt's bidding. He gave up the one point to seize eagerly upon, and defend another.

"But when I had come back, and apologised, to receive my apology as she did, and order me into confinement, with that hateful, cold tone and look, as if she did not care the least bit in the world for what I might care or feel. O Kenneth! it was more than I could bear."

"But, Hugh, let her be as cold and disagreeable as she likes, that is no business of yours. That she should perform aright the duty of the governor is her business. All you have to concern yourself about is, that you should do yours right, as the governed."

"Oh, but Kenneth, if you only could have seen her, how abominably stiff and provoking she was, you would feel how impossible it must be to me to humble myself to her. Fancy her triumph, when she thinks she has got the better of me. Kenneth, I can't do it."

"But, my dear Hugh, don't you see that the only brave and manly way is to go straight on, and do the right thing, without minding what any one thinks or says. Come, stand up like a man, and to the work, and the harder it is the better."

Hugh was silent, but there was a yielding expression in his face—his breath came quick and hard, as if he

were bracing himself for a great struggle. Kenneth went on with a sudden change of tone,—

“O Hugh, dear Hugh, it is all very well to speak about being brave and manly, and to try to shame you into doing right. But, after all, there is a better way. Don't you see it? God has made Aunt Jane your ruler for the time, and He means and wishes that you should obey her, and that you should do it pleasantly and cheerfully. Do it because He wishes it, dear Hugh.”

“If I had only a little time to think,” Hugh said, hurriedly, as he heard his uncle's step approach the door. “But there is Uncle George—and just at this moment I don't feel as if I could get through with it.”

“I'll ask Uncle George to give you a few minutes, and run up to our room, and tell God all about it, and He will help you,” Kenneth answered with affectionate earnestness.

Mr Grahame came in, looking grave and resolute. He would have spoken to Hugh, but Kenneth interposed.

“Please, uncle,” he pleaded, “give him only ten minutes—only five minutes. He wishes to do right; but he can't just at this moment. Please allow him to go up to his own room for only five minutes.”

Mr Grahame looked much surprised, but he could not resist the earnest supplication of Kenneth's whole manner. As soon as he heard the assenting “Well, five minutes, then,” Hugh darted out of the room, and up

stairs to the bed-room. He bolted the door, and threw himself on his knees beside the bed. He was too much excited to be able to ask anything from God. His thoughts were confused, and his wishes equally so. It seemed as if he wished to do right, and did not wish it; wished to know what he ought to do, and yet was afraid of the pain the knowledge might bring upon him. And yet, not for this confusion of thought and weakness of desire did he hold back from God. With the happy, relieved feeling of having come to One who could understand and be interested in his smallest thought and feeling, he poured forth his whole heart to his loving Father. If he could not ask anything—could not tell what he should ask or wished to ask—he could, at least, like King Hezekiah, spread out his case before Him; and this he did fully, confidently, and, in the doing it, found the light and the strength he required.

He rose from his knees, calm, decided, and, having lingered a moment to brush his disordered hair, he went gravely and quietly down-stairs. Kenneth was waiting for him. The first anxious glance showed that all was as he wished.

“In the drawing-room, Hugh,” he said, in a low voice, as if afraid of disturbing Hugh’s calmness; and he followed him closely, to give him the comfort of feeling that a friend was near.

Hugh was disturbed to find all the elder part of the family in the room, and his heart whispered, “Papa and

mamma would have taken care that this should not happen ;” but he silenced the murmur with Kenneth’s wise words, “It is no business of mine. All that concerns me is to do the right thing, and in the right way ;” and walking straight up to his aunt, he begged her pardon for his disobedience, and gave the required promise that he should be more obedient for the future.

Coldly, stiffly was the apology received, and very disagreeable sounded the ungracious words, “I am glad you have come to your senses at last.” But Hugh felt that it was to God he had made his submission, and that God had received it in all love and tenderness.

Hugh turned to his uncle to beg his pardon also, although that had not been stipulated for. Mr Grahame was much more gracious. He gave Hugh his hand, and said he was glad to make up with him. But his manner for some days was cold and reserved towards him, very unlike what it had been. Hugh felt the difference, and was much grieved by it, or perhaps I should say, vexed, for anger was mixed with grumbling. “Papa and mamma would not have done so ;” “papa and mamma would not have kept anger so long,” were poured into Kenneth’s ear ; and it required all Kenneth’s watchful care to keep the murmuring from increasing into dislike towards his uncle, and indifference about his opinion or regard.

The behaviour of the bystanders during this painful scene was characteristic.

Poor George could not repress his exultation in Hugh's humiliation. He had persuaded himself that it was Hugh's fault that he and Edward had got into disgrace with their father about their friend Burke. He had never forgotten nor forgiven Hugh's hasty words to himself upon that occasion. He had taken a strong dislike to him, and although, as I have said, he often took his part against other boys at school, yet at home he seized every opportunity to cross and vex him. I call him "poor" George, for in truth the malicious, revengeful feelings in which he indulged, made him moody and unhappy. They were oftener disappointed than gratified. And even when gratified, his conscience took care that the pleasure of their gratification should not be unmingled.

George was the only one whose sympathies were not with our hero. Of Kenneth's deep interest and affectionate sympathy I need not speak. But Percy and Elizabeth felt nearly as much. Percy stationed himself where Hugh could see him while he made his confession, in order that the boy might feel that a friend was at hand. And as Hugh turned away from his uncle, feeling awkward, uncomfortable, and uncertain what he should do next, Percy was in the way to give him a cordial shake of the hand, and Elizabeth, in her distant window, was watching to catch his eye, and invite him to her side.

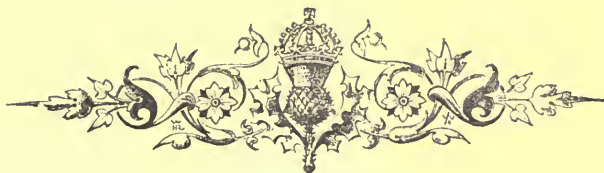
Edward, too, was of Hugh's party. His feelings were

the opposite of George's. So soon as he took time to reflect, he was shocked at the deceit they had proposed to practise. He was really thankful that anything, however unpleasant, had occurred to stop them, and deeply grateful to Hugh for the encouragement which had enabled him to make a full confession of his fault. He now followed Hugh as he went to Elizabeth, and putting his arm round his neck, he whispered earnestly—

“Never mind, Hugh. It is all over now. And you did it famously, like a brave boy, as you are.”

Altogether, the scene perhaps was less painful than he had expected. And sweeter to him than even Kenneth's tender sympathy was the feeling that his loving Father in heaven knew every particular of his trouble, was with him to strengthen him in the right, and to sympathise in his pain. And for that night at least, Hugh's prayer was not deficient in praise, as he poured out the fulness of his heart in thanks to the Lord, who had come to his help against the strong evil passions of his heart.





CHAPTER VIII.

A SCHOOL BROIL.

THERE was not so much fighting among the Academy boys as might have been expected where so many of different tastes and tempers were brought together. This was partly for lack of opportunity. The quarter-of-an-hour allowed for play at two different times through the day, was too precious to be given up to such a purpose. And as many of the boys lived at a considerable distance from the school, and the dinner hour of the greater part of them was fixed as early as they could be supposed to reach home, there was little time after the school was dismissed.

But another reason of their peaceableness among themselves lay in the fact, that they had an enemy without on whom to vent their combativeness, and in uniting against whom a party spirit was aroused, which helped to make them friendly to each other. Between the young gentlemen of the Academy and the boys of the

lower classes in the town there was a feud of long standing. The aristocrats called their foes the "blackguards," and were named by them in turn the "puppies." Now and then, what they called "regular bickers" took place, in which the whole school were engaged. But the more usual form of attack was, that troops of the town boys lay in wait in the streets leading from the Academy, and swept down upon such parties of academicians as were small enough to afford a fair chance of victory. It was seldom, indeed, that such victory was obtained. To do the "puppies" full justice, they were the most gallant party of the two. They stood more manfully by each other than their opponents—defended themselves with more spirit—took blows more bravely, and were more undaunted in attacking superior numbers. They were also better armed. The poor "blackguards" had only stones, while their adversaries had generally clackens and shinties, (a crooked stick for playing at ball,) and had always their straps—either with the books in them, or without the books, with one end twisted up in a scientific manner, peculiar to Academy boys, and which made a lump nearly as heavy and hard as a stone.

In these combats Kenneth had little share. He was in the seventh class, and the seventh class looked upon such encounters as beneath their dignity, and only joined now and then when their younger school-fellows were likely to be overwhelmed by superior numbers. But

Hugh—fearless, strong, and active—was a noted warrior.

“Well done, Highland bull!” and, “There goes the red deer!” would be shouted by one and another of his companions, as now his strong arm, and now his quick foot, rendered good service to his allies.

He entered into the spirit of the fight with his whole heart, but when it was over he always looked back upon it with dislike.

“It was a shame to strike that fellow with my strap,” he would say, “and he had nothing but his bare hands; and how savage I got. It may do all very well for other boys to get into these rows, but I am sure it does not do for me; I get into such a fury.” And so, although he never deserted his party in danger, nor declined to help a friend in need, still he avoided the bickers as much as he could, and was always glad when he got home, as he said, without hurting any one.

It was the same with the single combats—bunts, as they were called—between the Academy boys. Although most of the boys held fast to the schoolboy point of honour, never to attack a boy less or weaker than themselves, yet, as in all large schools, there were bullies among them. Of these the worst were two brothers of the name of Reid—big, strong fellows—whose chief characteristics were their great bodily strength, and their animal propensity to use it against the weak and helpless. As they had long ago proved their superiority over

the best fighters in the school, they were seldom interfered with, even when their tyranny over the weak was most revolting to the spectators. But this was a thing Hugh could not bear, and, on one or two occasions, he took the part of the oppressed, and defended himself and his *protégé* with a spirit and success, which did not astonish his adversary more than it did his class-mates. Proud of possessing such a champion, many offered to give him the instruction necessary to make his fighting as scientific as it was fearless and spirited. But to this Hugh would not listen.

He could defend himself and his friends at any time, he said, and as to fighting for the sake of fighting, he did not see any fun in it. If they wanted to prove who was strongest and quickest, there were plenty of better ways for trying that; and he meant to have as little to do with fighting of any kind as he could.

He was so lively, so good-tempered and generous, that, in spite of this absurd whim, as they thought it, he was a universal favourite, and was generally allowed to take his own way. One or two of the wits of the class, however, took a pleasure in teasing him; and trying to excite him to the fighting, both his taste and his principle abhorred.

One day, when Hugh's temper had been already somewhat tried by adverse circumstances in school-time, a boy, Blake, one of those same wits, made a regular attack upon him. He was not a bad kind of fellow in

the main, but too fond of teasing. He had remarked Hugh's sensitiveness about the honour of his native land, the Highlands, and his fiery impatience at any word against it or its inhabitants; so on this day he chose the Highlanders as his point of attack, and abused them as cowards, slaves, and everything mean. Hugh's anger was near the boiling point, when Blake, with well acted carelessness, went on:—

“Why, even the gentlemen are cowards. Did you ever hear,” to a circle of smiling spectators, “of the Colonel M'Leod, of the —th,” naming Hugh's father, “who ran away at the beginning of the battle of Waterloo, and was found lying in a ditch after it was over, roaring that he was killed, was killed, and should never see dear Scotland again?”

“It is a lie; and you know it is,” Hugh shouted, rising to confront the base slanderer.

“Dear me, M'Leod, was he any relation of yours?” with inimitable gravity and concern. “How stupid of me not to think of that. If I had only known”——

A furious blow interrupted him. Of course it was returned. A regular fight was begun. Hugh knew nothing of the science of boxing; but whether from his greater strength of muscle—for he was very strong of his age—or whether from mere chance, so it was at the second or third blow Blake was knocked down. The moment he saw his adversary on the ground, Hugh's

passion was gone. He ran to Blake, and helped him to rise, saying—

“I was very wrong. I am very sorry. I would never have struck you if I had not been in such a passion.”

“Thank you for nothing,” said Blake, sullenly. “I don’t care whether you are sorry or not. Come on now, and see if you can do that again,” and he placed himself in a fighting attitude.

“I don’t want to do it again,” Hugh said, simply. “If I am sorry I hurt you once, to be sure I don’t want to hurt you again.”

“To hurt me !” cried Blake, in a fury. “What do you mean by that impudence ? Do you suppose I could not soon get the better of you in a regular stand-up fight ?”

“I don’t know, and I don’t mean to try,” was Hugh’s calm answer. His anger was quite cooled, and he was keeping a guard over himself that it might not be again aroused.

“But, M’Leod,” cried the other boys who stood around, “that is not fair. You ought to give Blake his revenge.”

“Let him take it then ;” and Hugh turned round, and faced his angry opponent.

Blake aimed at him several furious blows. Hugh parried them, but made no attempt to strike in turn. Blake stopped.

"What are you about, you fool?" he cried, angrily.
"That is not the way to fight."

"Perhaps not; but I told you I was not going to fight."

"What are you going to do, then?" the other asked, in surprise.

"Well, the question is rather, what are you going to do?" Hugh said, with a half smile.

"Well, but, M'Leod," again interposed one of the bystanders, "you had no business to begin a fight if you did not mean to finish it."

"I know quite well I had no business to strike Blake, I told him I knew I was wrong, and that I was sorry for having struck him; but I don't see how it would make matters better if I were to strike him again now."

"But," said another, "when you got the better of him once, you should let him try if he cannot get the better of you now."

"Well, I am letting him try to get the better of me. He may try as long as he likes," Hugh said, in the same quiet tone.

"Oh! that's all nonsense," Blake cried, impatiently.
"Of course I am not going to strike if you won't strike back. Why can't you do as other boys do, and stand up like a man?"

"I don't know anything about what other boys do," Hugh answered; "for I never was among other boys before."

“Oh! well, if you don’t know how to fight, we’ll soon show you,” cried several at once. “Look here; double your fist this way.”

“But I have told you, and tell you again, I don’t mean to fight,” Hugh said, coolly and decidedly, stepping back a step from the offered teaching.

“And why not?” asked several.

“Because I don’t see any good, or any fun in fighting. And I see wrong in it besides.”

“Wrong in it! Oh dear, the good, sweet little boy! The innocent babe! The sweet little angel!” cried twenty voices, among which Blake’s was the loudest.

Hugh’s colour rose, his eyes flashed, involuntarily he clenched his fist, and raised his arm. But he checked himself, and stood quite still amid all their jeers and scoffs. It was far worse to bear than the hardest blows.

“Pray, tell us, you excellent, wise Master Good-boy, where is the wrong?”

“If I struck Blake, because I was angry with him, and wanted to hurt him, it would be wrong. I have no right to try to hurt him, merely because I am angry.”

“Well, but just have a fight to see who is strongest,” said one of the pleasantest looking of the bystanders.

He spoke quite good-humouredly, and Hugh had observed that he had not joined in the jeering of the others. So he turned to him to give the answer all expected.

"That might do well enough for some boys," he said, with a half smile, "but not for me. I am such an angry kind of a boy, that, even if I began to fight quietly, I should soon get angry. I know I should."

"Well, and what would be the harm? People must be angry sometimes. Boys must, at least."

"Perhaps they can't help it sometimes. But that is no reason why they should do what they know must certainly make them angry."

"What absurd nonsense you talk," said another; "all boys fight, and all boys get angry now and then. And where is the harm?"

Hugh looked very grave.

"There must be harm in getting angry, still more in making one's-self angry; because God has commanded us to put away from us 'all wrath and clamour, and all malice.'"

"Oh, the preacher! the preacher!" cried the boys again, with renewed laughter.

Hugh looked round with kindling eyes.

"What do you laugh at?" he said, very gravely. "Surely you do not laugh at what God says!"

No, they did not mean to do that exactly. They only meant to laugh at a boy who could boldly confess that God's commandment was the ruling motive of his conduct. Hugh's question, put in a tone of such grave surprise, fell like a weight on their feelings. Each paused involuntarily to ask, what they were laughing at.

And as no good or sufficient answer could be found, each felt awkward and uncomfortable, and was glad to turn from the subject, with some muttered remarks that he was a "queer fish," a "rum go;" and Hugh found himself at liberty to walk off without further parley.





CHAPTER IX.

DUTIES TO SCHOOL-FELLOWS.

WITH a dignified air, but a saddened heart, he went slowly towards the yards at the back of the Academy. As to all schoolboys, popularity was very dear to him. He had enjoyed his season of it to the utmost; and now he supposed it was gone for ever.

“They think me a missy and a sneak, and will never care to have anything to do with me,” he thought. “Well, let them think it. They are very welcome. I am sure I don’t care.”

But in his heart he felt that he did care; and he went over the whole scene with increased bitterness.

“What a set they are, roaring one deaf with their nonsense! So unfair, too! Why can’t they let a fellow speak? Why can’t they let a fellow stand by what he thinks right, without all that laughing and jeering?”

At that moment he heard behind him a step, light as a girl’s—a voice, low and timid as a girl’s, calling his name. Both voice and step were well known to him,

and the sound of them seemed to increase his irritation.

"Well," was the short answer he gave; and he did not stop nor look round. A pale, delicate-looking boy, about his own age, glided up to him, and put his hand timidly into his unyielding arm.

"I did so like the way you spoke, M'Leod," the boy said, with great earnestness. His voice and words seemed to fret Hugh beyond endurance. It required a strong effort to keep from tearing himself away from the other's grasp, and his "Did you?" was dry and contemptuous, while he did not deign to look round.

His manner was sufficiently discouraging, and poor Home was one who needed encouragement. But his whole heart was set upon the purpose for which he had come, that of expressing his feelings during the scene which had passed, and, if possible, of making a friend of its hero. After a moment given to the disappointment of finding the last object so unlikely of attainment, he continued, but still more timidly—

"I longed to stand out, and cry—'Well done,' and take my place by your side, while they all laughed and jeered."

"I am glad you did not," Hugh broke in bluntly. "Every one knows that the reason you do not fight is because you are——;" he stopped abruptly, checked by the deep flush which had crimsoned the white cheeks of his companion.

"Is because I am afraid," Home concluded, trying to speak calmly, and even to smile. "And I am afraid, afraid of almost everything, although I do hope it is something better than fear that keeps me quiet when every one insults me. And if you only knew, M'Leod, how little comfort and encouragement I have ever had, may be ——."

They were interrupted by a loud, cheery voice, calling on Hugh. Hugh turned gladly towards the new-comer. It was the pleasant-looking boy in the group of spectators to the fight. He was the very reverse of poor Home, one of the heroes of the school, dux of his class, and universally admired. He was a clever boy; and from his free, careless air, and quick off-hand way of doing everything in school or in the playground, he perhaps got credit for more talent than he really possessed. He was not, as I said of Blake, a bad kind of fellow in the main, but he indulged in one of the worst of schoolboys' vices, that of a light, scoffing spirit, about everything too high or too deep for him to comprehend. I do not mean merely as regarded sacred things, though with them, too, he meddled, as no wise, large-hearted man would have dared to do. But even of things of this world, human affection in its brightest, purest manifestations, unselfish devotion to a good cause, or enthusiastic admiration of the great and noble, even of these he spoke unbecomingly, because lightly, and treated them all as humbug and nonsense.

It is a sore pity that schoolboys cannot understand what a poor contemptible spirit this is. That they cannot see that there is no largeness of mind, but rather a narrowness and feebleness of soul, in refusing to credit anything beyond what lies on the mere surface of daily life, anything beyond what their blinded eyes can see, or their weak minds grasp. But it is because their minds are still weak that they do not see it. It is because they cannot understand, although they think they can do all things. When they are older, when their minds are stronger—when to their knowledge they have added wisdom, then we may hope that they will look back with regret upon the present state of their feelings, and will learn to regard that as their shame in which they now glory. But to return from this digression. Of Mason we are the more ready to hope—as we know this young scoffer at all good and high feelings is really a generous boy and an affectionate son and brother.

At this time he did not sport any of his scoffing opinions. They would not have been acceptable to Hugh, for Hugh was of a nobler spirit, a larger heart. He was not ashamed to tremble before things too great for him to comprehend. And he gloried in his power of being moved to enthusiasm by great and noble deeds. He was a heartfelt hero-worshipper, and rejoiced to be one. Mason was somewhat of a hero in his eyes—so clever, so handsome, so free in carriage and look. And that he was older than himself—that he belonged to a higher

class, made him prize his notice all the more. He was as much pleased to have Mason lean on his shoulder as he had been irritated to feel Home's timid hand lie on his arm. That hand which had been so timidly thrust in was now as timidly withdrawn, and Hugh and his brilliant companion were suffered to walk on alone.

Mason did not speak of the fight. He had come to tell Hugh of a grand challenge to combat which the whole school had received from the seventh class. This class was always much smaller than any of the others. At present it contained hardly thirty boys. But these thirty proposed to take their stand upon a heap of gravel in the middle of the yards, and to maintain it against all comers. Hugh was quite excited by the news, and in the eager discussion of different modes of attack, the two boys went on to the bottom of the walk.

As they turned, Hugh saw that Home stood where they had left him, and his heart smote him for unkindness, as he thought the boy seemed to look wistfully after him. The school-bell rang. They quickened their steps, and soon came up to Home, who stood leaning against one of the pillars of the sheds, which ran all round the yards. He was not now watching them. His eye was fixed upon a bright cloud, which was moving slowly across the sky. Hugh was struck by the expression of quiet but deep sorrow on the pale uplifted face.

“Hollo, Home! Are you not going in? Are you

moon-struck, or sun-struck, that you stand gazing there after the bell has rung?" Mason shouted.

"I am coming!" was the quiet answer. And again Hugh's heart smote him as he saw that Home only waited until they had passed, and then meekly followed them.

"He thinks I am ashamed of him," Hugh thought, and he felt he had given him cause so to think.

The remorse was soon forgotten. In the afternoon, Hugh stood on the steps of the porch, waiting for Kenneth. Kenneth was late, and the other boys were all gone, except Home, who lingered in the yards, looking wistfully back every now and then to see if Hugh would not join him.

"The bore!" Hugh muttered; "there he is loitering about. He wants to walk home with us, bother that he is. But he is too soon. Thanks, Kenneth, for staying so long," as he watched the boy go slowly out at the gate.

"Hollo, Sir Hugh! Is that you?" cried Kenneth's hearty voice. "Did you wait for me, old fellow?"

"Yes, there is to be a fight somewhere with the blackguards, and I thought I'd keep out of it."

"Oh, you flower of all chivalry, you knight of St Andrew, are you shirking a fight?" Kenneth asked, with mock surprise.

"I've been in rows enough to-day. I don't want more. I say, old King Ken, shall we go round by

Charlotte Square, to ask about Hugo? He was not at school?"

Hugh Grahame was so called, the *g* of his last name being, with schoolboy dexterity, thrust into his first, to distinguish him from his cousin. Kenneth willingly agreed to the proposal, and when they came out of the yards, he innocently turned west. Hugh gave him an impatient tug in the other direction.

"Not that way. This way is best," he said, in a half petted tone.

"Why, the other road is the shortest."

"Bother, never mind the shortest," dragging him on the way he wished.

"But Hugh, you want to keep out of the fight, and don't you hear the 'hollo, hollo' of our chaps up there, in Pitt Street?"

"Oh, bother, never mind the fight," was the only answer.

"Well, but why are you so anxious not to go the other road?" Kenneth asked, stopping resolutely short, as if determined to have a reason.

Hugh looked over his shoulder, to make sure Home was out of hearing, and then said—

"Oh, that bore of a fellow, Home, is loitering about for us to join him. And I don't choose to go up with him hanging on to us."

"Why, what harm could he do?"

"Oh, he is an awful bore, a regular missy, a poor

molly-coddle. But, oh ! I say, Kenneth, I got into such a row to-day ;” and the tale was poured into the elder brother’s ready ear.

“That’s right, Hugh, don’t let them bully you into fighting for nothing,” he said, heartily. “Don’t be afraid of what they may think or say. Don’t be a coward to show yourself brave.”

“Bully me ! I’d like to see them,” with a proud toss of his head. “But you see, Ken, that is the very thing that makes it a bore, that fellow Home drawing up to me in the way he does. Every one knows that he won’t fight, because he is afraid. I shouldn’t like the fellows to think I was one of his sort. And so I don’t want him to come hanging upon me.”

“How do you know he wants to hang upon you, or draw up with you ?” Kenneth asked.

Hugh told him all that had passed between Home and himself, and in the repetition, his remorse for his unkindness to Home awoke again in a slight degree. It was increased when Kenneth said, compassionately,

“Ah, poor fellow ! I remember now, Hugo said one day that he had a miserable home. His father and mother died when he was a morsel of a boy ; he has no brothers or sisters, but lives alone with an uncle—a coarse, rude kind of man, that no gentleman will have anything to do with. He looks upon poor Home as a nuisance, and although Home has money of his own, his uncle grudges every shilling that is spent upon him. He

never would have sent him to the Academy if Uncle Edward, and some other gentlemen, who had known Home's father, had not remonstrated and shamed him into it."

"Is he a miser?" Hugh asked.

"I don't know that he is. Hugo says he'll spend plenty of money upon drinking bouts with low blackguards he picks up off the streets. But he just likes to look at his money, and he thinks Home such a stupid kind of a fellow, he thinks it a plague to have anything to do with him. In ordinary times he only neglects and laughs at him. But when he has drunk too much, Hugo says he is like a wild beast, ready to kill any one that comes in his way. And poor Home, living always with him, and never having any one to stand up for him, has got cowed and broken-spirited. Hugh, I think you should stand by him."

"Oh, I am willing enough to be kind to him," with a patronising air.

"But to have a boy of your own age be kind to you is not exactly a pleasant thing," Kenneth objected.

"Well, but really as to going further and making a companion or friend of a fellow like that. It is what I am not going to do."

"But if you ought," Kenneth urged, a little gravely.

"Oh, as to that, there is no 'ought' about it. I can't see where or how you can make an 'ought' in the case."

"The strong ought always to help the weak," Ken-

neth said, very decidedly, adding, in the reverent tone he always used in speaking of such matters, "The God who made you strong, made him weak. And I am sure that when He brought you together, He meant you to help him."

Hugh made an impatient movement of his body, as if the doctrine was distasteful to him, and yet he did not know how to contradict it.

"You see, Kenneth," he said, "it may be all very well to say these kind of things, in a general way. But schoolboys have so many things to do, and such a wild, boisterous kind of life, one can hardly expect them to mind all these little things."

"Does God care for schoolboys less than for other people?" Kenneth asked, gravely. "Are schoolboys not bound to obey His laws as much as any one else? Schoolboys seem to think they have a kind of licence to keep God's law or not, as they like. When did they ever get it? God knew we were to be schoolboys, and if He had meant us to be less strict than other people, would He not have told us so?"

"Oh, but you know, Kenneth, I did not mean that," a little shocked. "But where do you find any law to oblige me to stand by that poor sneak Home!"

"Do unto others as you would they should do to you," Kenneth said, readily.

"I am sure I don't want him to stand by me," with his roguish smile.

Kenneth would not return the smile, but said very seriously, that Hugh knew what the commandment meant; that we were to do to others as we might like others to do to us, if we were in their situation.

"I can't fancy myself in Home's situation," was said, a little arrogantly.

Kenneth did not speak. After a minute or two of uncomfortable silence, Hugh looked up in his face, and asked if he were angry.

"I am disappointed in you, Hugh," he answered. "I thought you had more generosity than to glory in a strength which is no merit of yours. I call you a knight of chivalry; and I thought you had enough of the chivalrous spirit to be willing to use the strength God has given you for those who have less of it."

"And so I am willing, and so I do," Hugh said, warmly. "That great bullying fellow Reid never ventures now to bully the little chaps when I am by."

But don't you see, Hugh, that the weak in spirit are worse off than the weak in body? You said yourself, that you cared far more for the boys' jeers than for any blows they could have given you. You should stand up for that poor trembling spirit, and give him the strength and encouragement of your friendship, and don't be afraid of what the boys may think about it. Bah! I say it is cowardly to keep back from a poor fellow who needs your help, only because you are afraid the other boys may think that you are like him. Let them think

what they like. Who is afraid of them? Do you the right and kind thing, and leave everything else alone."

Contempt from Kenneth stung Hugh more than from any one else, and he asked, somewhat angrily—

"Who said I was afraid?"

"Yourself said it," was Kenneth's cool rejoinder. "You said you were afraid to give that poor fellow the help he needed and wished for, lest the other fellows should think you were one of his sort. O Hugh, is that not selfish? It is not like you."

"And I don't feel like myself," Hugh said, despondingly, "and nothing is like what it used to be. At school there is so much to do, and the fellows are worrying, and teasing, and provoking one, so that one cannot get time to think what one should do. And then, at home, we have not our own Lizzie and Kate to help us to get rid of any selfish, angry feelings, and to help us to kind and right ones. Elizabeth means to be kind, but somehow she does not know the way. And although Percy is a capital fellow, one cannot often get at him. And any way, at the very best, none of them are like Lizzie and Kate; and so I just often think of giving up the fight to keep right for just now, and stumbling through this part of my life as I best can, and leaving the setting myself all straight again until I go home."

"Give up the fight! Oh, shame! shame! Who'd ever give up?" Kenneth said, warmly. "Is this my

own gallant Sir Hugh? When the knights of old went forth in search of adventures, and to help all who needed help, do you think they gave up and turned back whenever the business in hand proved more difficult or dangerous than they had expected? Or do you think they sat down and cried, because they had this deep ditch to cross, or that steep hill to climb?"

"Sat down and cried; O Kenneth! I am sure I do not sit down and cry."

"Well, then, you stand up and grumble, and that is as bad," Kenneth said, joining in Hugh's laugh. "Don't you remember, Kate used to say that a brave knight always kept up a good heart, and went cheerfully on to danger and hardship? Remember, Hugh, faint heart never won fair lady. Faint-heart is the last name you should like to get."

"Yes, indeed, I would rather be Bunyan's 'Great-heart.'"

"Then you must act Great-heart's part, and stand up against every giant, lion, or hobgoblin that comes to turn you from the right road."

"And the fear of being taken for one of Home's sort is the hobgoblin now, is it not? Well, we'll see. I think I can slay him; and you shall find that I am ready enough, from this day, to stand by the poor fellow."



CHAPTER X.

FORGETFULNESS.

YES, the promise was too soon forgot. The next day began the famous combat between the seventh class and the rest of the school, and every boy's thoughts were full of that.

It was what they called a "plucky" thing for the small seventh to stand out against the other six classes, some of which numbered more than a hundred boys. And as, when a seventh class man was fairly dislodged from his castle, he was bound never to rejoin his companions, while no similar forfeit lessened the number of the assailants, so it seemed certain that the victory must be for the latter if they persevered long enough. But although victory might be sure enough in the end, they found it harder to gain than they had expected. The superior order of the small band made their defence as systematic and regular as the attack of the wild horde of assailants was rude and disorderly. And their position gave them a further advantage. Only a few of the

besiegers could attack at once, and part of the strength and attention of these few was expended in maintaining their footing on the slippery, crumbling sides of the fortress. In proportion as the issue of the fight seemed uncertain, both parties grew more eager. The besiegers formed themselves into troops, and appointed captains and lieutenants over them. Now was the hour of Hugh's triumph. All the leaders, who were mostly of the sixth class, were eager to number him among their adherents. And even after his place had been fixed, he was constantly borrowed by one and another captain, whose troop occupied for the time the post of danger. No wonder poor Home was forgotten. And as he was of little use to any one, he was allowed to keep so much in the background that it was only now and then Hugh caught a glimpse of him to remind him of his promise to Kenneth.

One day Hugh came upon a group of his class-mates who were surrounding Home, and bullying him to make him do something. Hugh heard him begging piteously, almost as it seemed with tears, that they would release him. And although his lip coiled with contempt at the thought of a boy so abasing himself, he dashed gallantly into the circle, and demanded to know what they were doing to Home.

One of them explained the business. Profane swearing, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, was then a rare vice among Academy boys. But many of them

made free use of expressions which seemed, and rightly seemed, to the tender conscience of Home, too like oaths to admit of his uttering them. Now and then, in his own timid way, he had remonstrated with the others for using them, and had tried to open their eyes to the real meaning of the words they so lightly uttered; and for an offence of this kind they were now trying to frighten him into saying the very word he had condemned.

“For shame!” cried Hugh, indignantly, when he understood the state of the case. “Don’t you know that is simply an oath, to all intents and purposes; and even if you are fools enough not to see it yourselves, what right have you to make a boy who knows better sin against his conscience? You should be ashamed of yourselves.”

His tone and manner irritated the boys. They turned upon him.

“Oh, come,” cried several, “let us try our hands on the saint. He’ll make better fight than that poor sneak. M’Leod, we are going to make you say it.”

“Are you, indeed?” he asked, standing still, and looking coolly round upon them.

“Oh, you’ll make nothing of M’Leod,” said one or two. “He is a different sort from Home.”

Indeed, the contrast between the two was striking. Hugh, erect, decided, looking defiance on all. And poor Home, in spite of the interest he felt in Hugh,

unable to keep himself from slinking away to a safe distance so soon as he was released. And yet whose resistance to evil was the strongest? That of the bold boy, without a particle of fear in his composition, to whom the scene was only exciting? Or that of the trembling fear-bound spirit, to whom one angry word or unkind look was positive pain? To whom was the temptation the strongest? To Hugh who, secure in his popularity, cared very little whether or not he angered his present opponents? Or to Home, whom every one despised and neglected, and who, in his intense thirst for the affection of his school-fellows, would so gladly have given all he possessed to please any of them? Surely to Home the struggle was the most severe—his resistance to it the most praiseworthy. And yet Hugh looked upon the little scene with the self-complacent reflection that he had done so much better than Home. So boys always judge. They blame their neighbour for being weak where they are strong, and forget that the other is strong where they are weak. The self-willed boy blames the easy-tempered one for being led into evil. The facile, easily-moved boy cannot sufficiently condemn the obstinacy of the stronger will, the more decided character. Neither remembers to put himself in the other's place, and so arise harsh judgments of others, unmerited praise of one's-self.

An unexpected fall of snow interrupted the siege of the gravel heap before victory had declared for either

party. Snow-balling was now the order of the day; and, during play time, the whole yard was full of shouting, laughing groups, pelting each other with snow-balls, sometimes in single combats, sometimes in bands. Here again was Hugh—a hero. No one was so dauntless in the attack, so quick in the retreat, or took blows and mischances with such unfailing good humour and cheerfulness. No bicker could go on without his being pressed into the service of one side or other.

One day Hugh had stayed in school behind his companions; and as he was hastening across the yards to join them, he overtook Hugh Grahame and Home walking together in earnest talk.

“Hollo, old fellow! Where are you away to?” Grahame cried, holding up a stick he carried to bar his cousin’s progress.

Without an instant’s pause, Hugh leaped lightly over the stick, looked back to laugh, and say that the sixth class had challenged theirs to a snow-fight, and he was going to help, and then ran off, singing at the height of his voice, “Scots wha hae.”

“What a fellow he is,” Grahame said, looking after him, admiringly. “So full of spirit, and yet so generous; so kind and gentle to girls and children. You can’t think, Home, how all our nursery gentry love him. Baby won’t look at any one else, when he is in the room. And he’ll sit and play at ball or bo-peep with her as long as she likes. And goes leading her about

the room, and coaxing her to walk alone, just as tenderly, mamma says, as if he were her mother. Oh, he is a capital fellow."

"You said he was very good, too," said Home.

"So he is," eagerly answered the other. "You can't think how fond he is of the Bible, and how he likes to feel that God is near him, and sees all he does."

"Do you know," he added, after a pause, "it was knowing him that made me think I should like to care about good things, as I told you just now, I wished to make myself care. He is so full of spirit, so up to fun, that I see religion cannot make people dull, as I used to fancy it must. Before I knew him, it used to be only stupid, quiet kind of people who ever spoke to me about these things. And I used to fancy, that if I began to care, as they wished me to do, I should get to be like these dull, stupid people."

"Oh no," cried Home, earnestly, "it cannot make one dull and stupid to know that God is ready to forgive all our sins; that He is a loving Father, and is ever taking care of us, and doing us good, and loves us so tenderly as even to ask for our poor love in return, and give us things to do for Him. I dare say," in a tremulous voice, "you might think it was these things that made me so stupid and useless. . . ."

"O Home!" Grahame interrupted, shocked at his own heedlessness. "I did not mean—that is, I did not

think—Don't suppose I don't like you, although you are a little quiet."

"You cannot deny though, Grahame, that I was one of the stupid people who made you afraid to begin to care about good things," Home said, firmly. "But, indeed, Grahame, you must not think it was these things that made me dull. If it had not been for caring about these things, I don't know what ever should have become of me."

Vociferous cries of "Grahame, Grahame, where are you, old lazy bones?" here interrupted the friends' talk. After a fruitless attempt to persuade Home to go with him, Grahame left him, and went to take his part in the combat.

Home stood watching him, tears slowly rising to his eyes.

"No one calls me. No one wants me," he said. "I am of no use to any one. Even in this thing, where I thought I might do good to dear kind Grahame, I have only done harm. No wonder he was afraid to be like me." Here the tears began to flow fast. "No wonder he thought religion must be a sad dull thing, when he heard such a boy as I am speak of having it. Oh, why must I live on, when no one cares for me, when I am in everybody's way. Why may I not go at once, to be with dear mamma and papa?" and covering his face with his hands, he sobbed aloud in bitterness and desolation of spirit.

But God did not leave him long thus desolate and comfortless. If He had given him a weak body, and a tremulous spirit, as regarded worldly things, he had also given him a strong, full faith in Himself, and had taught him to bring all his troubles and sorrows to Him ; and He visited him now in his sore distress, and caused him to rest his aching heart on the sure confidence of a Father, and an Elder Brother's tender love. His tears ceased to flow, and, telling his God all his anxiety, lest his dulness might have been the means of keeping back his kind friend from God, he forgot all his own sorrow in asking blessings for Grahame.

It so happened that Kenneth had observed Home standing alone and desolate, while all the others were snow-balling ; and that evening he asked Hugh if he had not forgotten his promise about Home.

"As if a fellow could give up snow-balling for a poor spoon like that," Hugh muttered, impatiently. But his promise had been recalled to his mind, and he could not so easily banish it again.

The next day, when he saw Home standing alone in the yard, looking very forlorn, conscience told him of his promise, and he went up to speak to him. He went only to satisfy his conscience, feeling little of that spirit of kindness, which might have taught him how best to serve and please the poor boy. And no better mode of showing him kindness occurred to his mind than that of asking him to join their riotous party.

Home looked pleased to be addressed at all by Hugh, for whom he had the most profound admiration, but he hesitated to accept the invitation.

"I have got a cold," he said. "I should be afraid to get wet; and my head aches."

It was not a prudent answer. With all a schoolboy's contempt for complaints of illness, or dread of getting wet, the boys who were with Hugh repeated his words in every absurd intonation of whining complaint, and with merry peals of laughter; and Hugh, who was provoked to be deprived of so easy and pleasant a way of satisfying his conscience, did not try to stop them.

"Poor dear, has he really got a cold?" cried one.

"Oh! don't say 'he.' Don't you know this is sweet, good Miss Polly Home?" said another.

"But the poor darling's throat ought to be rubbed with camphorated oil," suggested a third, suiting the action to the word, and rubbing their victim's throat and chest with dirty snow.

This wit was received with rapturous applause, and others proceeded to follow the example—one washing his face with snow, and another thrusting a lump of it into his mouth for a cough mixture. Then the proposal to put him to bed was eagerly welcomed, and while some held him down, others piled snow upon him up to his very chin.

Hugh did not help in the persecution, but neither did he interfere to check it. As I have said, he was

provoked because Home would not allow him to have at the same time the satisfaction of keeping his promise, and the pleasure of joining in his companions' play. He could not help being amused, too, at the sight of poor Home, his face and hair dripping wet, lying covered up with snow; while his half-crying entreaties to be set free awoke all a schoolboy's contempt for weakness.

These entreaties, which Hugh disregarded, reached the ears of a better champion. Kenneth strode up to the party.

"What are you about there, you little blackguards?" he said, imperiously, at the same time lifting up one of Home's tormentors by the collar of his jacket, and throwing him to a little distance, as if he had been a dog or cat. "Off with you, or I'll give you reason to cry out too. Off, I say;" and he was too strong and too decided not to be obeyed.

As the crowd round Home dispersed before Kenneth's vigorous shoves and threats of vengeance, Hugh got a better sight of him, and was shocked to see how ill he looked. His very lips were blue with cold, his teeth chattered; and when Kenneth had helped him to shake off the snow, and to rise to his feet, he trembled so much that he could hardly stand.

"I say, old fellow, have these scamps hurt you?" Kenneth asked, in some anxiety, as he put his arm kindly round him.

"No, no ; it is only that I am very cold," he answered, feebly, putting his hand upon the front of his shirt, which was dripping wet.

Kenneth watched him with increasing uneasiness, as he stood clinging to his arm, gasping for breath.

"What makes you breathe in that uncomfortable way?" he asked.

"I don't know. There was something wrong before—a kind of pain and weight on my chest, and, I suppose, the struggling and row made it worse."

"I tell you what it is, you must go home. You are not a bit fit to go back to school," Kenneth said, decidedly. "I'll run in and tell Mr B——, and get him to send you home."

"No; oh no! please don't," Home cried, imploringly. "He'll think it was all their fault, and be angry; and, indeed, I was ill before. Please—please—don't."

Kenneth would have persisted; but Home begged so piteously, and seemed so really distressed, that he yielded, and contented himself with trying to make him more comfortable.

"Lean back upon the wall," he said, "and I'll try to dry you a bit;" and, taking out his handkerchief, he first tried to dry his hair and neck, and then, kneeling down, he set to work to rub off the snow still adhering to his trousers. Home feebly remonstrated against his taking so much trouble; but Kenneth did not heed him, but

continued his labours until the bell called them back to school. He went with Home to the door of his classroom, and was by his side again the moment the school was dismissed in the afternoon, to protect him from any annoyance, and to give him his arm to lean upon in his walk home.





CHAPTER XI.

REPENTANCE.

IN the first moment that Hugh realised how much poor Home had suffered, the whole current of his feelings was changed. He did not need Kenneth's indignant "What in all the world tempted you to stand by and let them use the poor fellow so?" to make him feel the most sincere sorrow and shame. He was filled with compassion for Home—with anger against himself. Feeling as if the whole blame of the mischief rested on him, he had stood aloof while Kenneth had so tenderly waited upon Home, earnestly longing to offer his services, and yet thinking he was unworthy to do so. He followed Kenneth and Home at a little distance, as they left the Academy, watching every look and motion of the latter, and making himself very miserable with the thought that every symptom of illness and suffering should be laid to his account.

On the following morning, it happened that Hugh, George, and Edward, were ready earlier than usual, and

they went round by Charlotte Square for Hugh Grahame. In this way they went down Howe Street, which they did not usually do, and just as they passed Mr Home's house, the door opened, and their school-fellow came out. It was a very disagreeable day. The frost had given way through the night—there was a thick wet fog, and the air had that uncomfortable, penetrating chilliness which always accompanies the beginning of a thaw. Home seemed to shudder as he felt the cold dampness. And when he began to come down the high steps, his knees shook under him, so that he was glad to steady himself by taking hold of the railings.

George and Edward had walked on; but the two Hughs stood still waiting for him.

"I say, old fellow," cried Grahame, "what is wrong? You are shaking like an aspen leaf."

"I don't know. I am not well," he said, trying to get up a smile. "I could not sleep last night, I was so hot. And now I seem cold all over, and my head aches."

"Cold!" cried Grahame in consternation, as he gave him his hand. "Why, your hand is like a red-hot coal. You can't go to school like that, you know. Come, run back and ask your uncle to give you a note to the rector, and Hugh and I can wait for it."

Home shook his head sorrowfully.

"No, uncle does not believe I am ill. He thinks it all sham. And when I asked to stay at home, he bade me be off, for a lazy dog that I was. Don't go to him --

don't make him angry. Oh, don't, Grahame!" he pleaded earnestly, as Grahame tried to get away from him, and go in to confront the harsh uncle.

His entreaties were too piteous to be withstood, and Grahame, making him lean upon him, turned slowly from the door.

"It is a shame—a burning shame," he cried, indignantly shaking his fist at the windows of the dining-room, where he supposed Mr Home to be. "You ought to be in bed at this moment, that is what you ought to be. If I were you, now, I should be put to bed at once, and have all kinds of nice things, and have mamma sitting beside me to nurse me, and to ask every half-hour how I was, or whether I wanted anything."

Poor Home was in no state to withstand agitating thoughts. The hot tears ran down his cheeks at the contrast his own motherless, forlorn condition presented to the picture Grahame had drawn. In the darkness of the misty morning he hoped they might not be seen by his companions; but they made his head ache more painfully, and, by blinding him, they served to render his steps still more uncertain.

Hugh McLeod had held back at first; but when he saw how feebly Home walked, he came forward, and, without speaking, took possession of his books, and made him lean upon him, as well as upon Grahame. Perhaps the gentle-hearted boy's tears flowed faster at this kindness, but certainly it comforted him, and, in

the squeeze he gave Hugh's arm, he tried to convey the thanks he could not well speak.

"I'll tell you what," Grahame cried, suddenly, after they had walked a little way in silence; "the best plan will be for us to get Mr B—— to send him home. He'll do it at once. Any one can see with half an eye he is only fit for bed. Hugh, will you speak, or shall I?"

Glad to be of any use, Hugh promised at once to be spokesman, and so soon as he could catch their master's attention, he stood up and stated the case in a way that showed the real interest and anxiety he felt. Home was called up, examined, kindly pitied, and advised to go home and to bed. The nervousness caused by the public questioning increased the shivering tremor which shook his whole frame. Mr B—— decided that he was not fit to go alone, and, concluding from Hugh's anxious manner that they were special friends, he asked him to take charge of the invalid. Hugh was glad to do so, and glad also to feel that his leaving his class at that special time was something of a sacrifice; for the lessons of the day were recapitulatory, and, with his good memory, he always gained places on such occasions.

They walked slowly and silently; Hugh was meditating how best to express his sorrow for yesterday's unkindness. And poor Home could think of nothing but of the comfort of being quiet, and getting his aching head laid down on his pillow.

When they reached the house, Home withdrew his hand from Hugh's arm, thanking him for his support, and saying that he could now manage for himself.

"No, no," cried Hugh, eagerly, "I must see you safe to your own room."

And Home, dreading an unpleasant scene with his uncle, was glad to have his friend to help him through it.

The door was opened by an elderly female servant, who, as Hugh told Kenneth, looked as "cross as two sticks."

"Bless me, Master Charles," she cried, "what in all the world has brought you home at this hour?"

"He is very ill; he must go to bed," Hugh answered, in a decided tone, pushing past the old woman, who seemed somewhat inclined to bar their entrance.

"Go to bed, forsooth! And who do you think is going to be at the trouble of making his bed twice in one day? Or who do you think is going to be bothered messing about, waiting upon a big lazy fellow like that? Not me, I can tell; I've other fish to fry."

Before Hugh could find words wherewith to express his indignation at this speech, the dining-room door opened, and Mr Home came out. He was a tall, well-made man, with a face which should have been handsome if it had not been for the unmistakable traces of dissipation on the bloated features, and for the expression which spoke too plainly of a coarse, self-indulgent nature. It was not an ill-tempered expression, however.

And if his tone, as he cried, "Hallo, Master Charles, you here," was rough, it was not fierce as Hugh had expected. Such as it was, however, it made poor Home shrink back behind his companion, who stood boldly forth to his help.

"He is very ill, sir," he said, looking defiance at the uncle, whom he fancied a monster of cruelty; "and Mr B—— sent him home."

"Thank him for nothing," was the careless answer. "It's bad enough to be bored with such a milk-and-water cub at any time, without having the nuisance of his hanging about the fireside the whole livelong day."

"He is not going to hang about the fireside at all," Hugh said, bristling up to resist a tyranny the other had no thought of exercising. "He must go to bed at once."

"Must!" repeated Mr Home, greatly amused by the boy's manner.

"Yes, must," persisted Hugh. "He ought never to have left it. It's a burning shame to both you and this woman that you could suffer him to go out on such a day, and he so ill."

"O M'Leod," whisperingly remonstrated Home, terrified at his champion's boldness.

"And pray, who are you, my young turkey-cock, who crows so boldly in other people's houses?" Mr Home asked, with the same amused smile.

"I am Hugh M'Leod, and Home's friend. And I

am obliged to stand up for him when those who should do it won't."

"Well, you are a fine bold fellow," Mr Home said, passing the boys on his way up-stairs. "I only wish you were my nephew, instead of that poor white-faced missy."

"But I am sure I don't wish you were my uncle," retorted the impolitic Hugh, leading Home triumphantly into the dingy back room, which the other had pointed out as his.

Home sunk wearily down on the first chair, resting his burning forehead on his hands.

"Let me help you to undress," Hugh said, in a voice as compassionate and tender as it had been bold and passionate in speaking to the uncle.

"But, dear M'Leod, you should go back to the Academy," Home objected, in a weak, suffering tone.

"Not till I have seen you in bed," Hugh asserted decidedly. "Home, how can I leave you alone with that abominable uncle, and that horrible old hag of a servant?"

"Oh, poor Kitty is not at all so bad as she pretends," Home said, trying to smile.

"Is that hateful old witch's name Kitty?" Hugh exclaimed, pausing in his work of undressing Home. "That is too bad," with a deep groan, adding, in a resigned tone, "At any rate, it is a comfort no one would think of calling her Kate."

Home was too unwell to feel wonder or curiosity at this enigmatical speech, and as Kitty came in at the moment, no more could be said on the subject. She seemed anxious to prove the truth of Home's assertion, for she brought in a pan of burning coals to light a fire; and although she did drive about the fire-irons in an angry manner, and did pull the counterpane off the bed with a series of most vicious tugs, yet she took pains to get the fire to burn up quickly, and she brought up a hot iron and ironed all the bed-clothes before Home lay down.

Hugh had assisted his friend into bed, had arranged his pillows, and tucked him in comfortably, and still he lingered as if unwilling to go away. He held by the post of the bed, shifted uneasily from one foot to another, opened his mouth as if to speak, coloured violently, turned to the door, then back again to the bed-post, and at last burst out vehemently,

"Home, I say, I wanted to tell you. I wanted to say—O Home, I am so sorry to have been so unkind, so cruel, yesterday. And now, if you are very ill—if you should never get better—O Home," and he fairly gave way to tears. It did not occur to him that it was imprudent to agitate his sick friend, and that the suggestion, that he might not recover, was not the most pleasant he could make. His mind was full only of remorse, and of the desire to express it.

Neither did Home mark the full import of Hugh's

doleful prognostications. He was only anxious to set his friend's mind at rest, and eagerly reminded him that he really had taken no part in yesterday's tormentings.

"But I could have prevented it," said Hugh, shaking his head. "All those fellows who happened to be there are just the ones who let me lead them; I could have stopped them if I had liked."

"But a fine strong fellow like you could not possibly think so little could hurt me," urged the generous Home. "It is only that I am so weak and useless always, and was not well, besides."

"A fine strong fellow, indeed!" Hugh repeated, in bitter self-contempt. "Much credit I have in my strength, truly, when I cannot use it to help the weak. But I was worse than you think, Home. I did know that they were teasing you; but I was angry because you would not let me keep my promise, without any trouble on my part, and I was glad they should tease you. And all along I have been feeling spiteful and wrong to you. Kenneth showed me, long ago, that I ought to be kind and friendly to you; and I was angry to know I ought, just because I did not quite fancy you, because you are a little dull and stupid." Hugh, in the vehemence of his self-reproach, did not reflect that Home could not greatly enjoy being called "dull and stupid."

Poor Home's cheek flushed, as he realised the painful

fact, that all his companions thought him so. Hugh went on,

“O Home, it’s no use trying to excuse me. I hate myself.”

Home made a great effort to check the burning tears that had risen to his eyes, and, amid all his pain, and in spite of the violent shivering fit which shook the whole bed, he smiled, and said, even playfully,

“But you must not hate yourself. You are my friend, and I love you, and I don’t choose any one to hate my friends.”

“Yes, indeed, Charlie, we must be friends now,” cried Hugh, unconsciously using the more familiar name, “I know better now than to be afraid to have you for a friend. So good and generous as you are, you are worth twenty of those rude, strong boys.”

Now that he had disburdened his mind of the self-reproach which had filled it, he was better able to observe his friend’s condition, and to be alarmed at the signs of severe suffering.

“Surely you are very ill,” he said, as he took the hand Home held out to him as a seal of their promised friendship. “Your hands are so hot, and your cheeks so red, while you are shivering with cold. And your eyes look so strange, and your breath comes in such a panting way. Charlie, you must see a doctor.”

Home shook his head.

"My uncle never has a doctor in the house. He does not like to pay for one. All the times I have been ill, he has never allowed one to be sent for, even when Kitty asked him, and he listens more to her than to anybody."

"But have you ever been so ill as you are now?" Hugh asked.

"I don't know. I am not sure that I have. I do feel very uncomfortable," he answered languidly; and as if glad to give way to the feeling of illness now that he had openly complained, he closed his eyes, and turned his head wearily away from the light.

"I'll go to Uncle Edward," said Hugh, decidedly. "He'll come without money, I know."

"But," cried Home, rousing himself in his generous wish to keep Hugh out of trouble; "it is so far to Charlotte Square, and you ought to go back to school. I am afraid Mr B—— will be angry."

"Well, there is Dr Hill in this street. He is quite a nice kind man. I know him, he came to see Kenneth when Uncle Edward was out of town. Only you know," with an amount of reflection unusual to him, "I could not so well ask him to come without a fee. No; I had better run for Uncle Edward at once. I won't be long," and he turned to leave the room.

"But Hugh, Hugh," cried Charlie, eagerly, "it would be of no use. Dr Grahame would not come—no doctor would come against uncle's will."

"Well, then, I'll go and get him to send me," cried Hugh, stoutly, leaving the room.

"I'm afraid he won't do it," sighed Charlie, to whom the prospect of seeing the pleasant friendly Dr Grahame was very tempting. "And Hugh, at any rate, you had better try to get round Kitty, and set her upon uncle. He does not like to vex her, because she is such a good cook."

Hugh did not hear this; but at any rate it was not at all his way to try to get round any one. He walked boldly into the dining-room. It was empty. He was forced to go back to Home to ask where he should find his uncle.

"Oh, he must be in his smoking-room, up-stairs," said Home, and he gave Hugh directions to find it, adding, "that if he were smoking, it would give them a better chance, as he was always good-natured then."

Hugh cared very little whether he were good-natured or not. He ran up-stairs, knocked at the door, and, hardly waiting for the surly permission to enter, he opened it, and marched boldly in.

Mr Home sat in what we call American fashion, lolling back in an easy-chair, with his feet on a table in front of him. The attitude added as little grace to his figure, as the act of puffing out the smoke gave of pleasantness to his face. Hugh thought he looked more repulsive, and more ungentlemanly than before.

His "Well, turkey-cock, what do you want?" spoken

out of the corner of his mouth, sounded discouraging enough. But Hugh cared little for encouragement.

"I came up to tell you that Charles is very ill, and must have a doctor, and to ask you whom you would choose to send for."

"Very obliging, indeed," Mr Home said, sarcastically. "Perhaps you might have added to the favour by allowing me the choice of sending at all, or doing without a doctor."

"There is no choice to be given," said Hugh, indignantly. "You could not let your nephew die without help. What should you think of yourself. What would others think of you if you did?"

Hugh spoke just what he felt, without considering the probable effect of his words. But the deepest calculation could not have taught him better how to move Mr Home. His was a strange, reckless, uncontrollable nature. A word, a look, was often enough to awaken the better feelings of his heart, and then for the time he would give them as full sway over him as he generally allowed to the baser and more animal propensities and passions of his ungoverned character. Such was the case now.

"What would others think of me!" he repeated, taking the pipe out of his mouth, rising, and walking with hurried steps up and down the room. "What can any one think of me worse than I deserve—worse than they do now? But you are right, you good brave

boy. Go to your Uncle Edward. I know him well. He'll come at once to see the boy, because he is William's son. Ask him to come for William Home's sake, and he'll do it. Though, as far as I am concerned, the whole world would not tempt him to cross my threshold. And yet once we were such friends. Oh, my folly, my cursed folly!" and, throwing himself on his chair, he covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

"I'll go at once, sir," said Hugh. His tone now as respectful as it had hitherto been the reverse. These signs of real and deep feeling had inspired him with an awe which no blustering or imperiousness could have excited. When he had reached the door he turned, and going up to Mr Home, held out his hand, saying, even timidly—

"And I am so much obliged to you for allowing me to go."

Mr Home seized the hand, and, drawing the boy to him, he put back the hair off his forehead, and gazed fixedly and even tearfully into his fair open face.

"Boy," he said solemnly, "yours is a good face, and one that promises a fair life. I like your spirit; but beware. Take warning by me. Your uncle could tell you that I was once just as promising as you are. My brow was as open as yours, my eye as clear, my look as unshrinking. And what has made me what I am, such as no gentleman, worth the name, will speak to, or even recognise? It was nothing but self-indulgence, begun

at first in little things, and carried on until it became a tyrant that I could not withstand, though to obey its commands might cost me my life here and my salvation hereafter. Boy, boy, resist the beginning of evil, and never give yourself rest until you can feel that over you no passion, no feeling, has uncontrolled sway. Learn to govern yourself, if you would not be governed by the most hateful of tyrants, an unrestrainable will;" and with another deep groan, he quitted Hugh's hand, and gave him a little push, saying, almost fiercely, "Now, go."

Hugh looked into Charles's room to tell him of his success, and then ran out of the house, and up the steep streets, at a pace no town-bred boy could have equalled. His great desire was to catch his uncle before he went out for the day; but he was too late.

"Oh, what shall I do?" he cried, despairingly, when he had heard the servant's unfavourable answer, and he was turning away from the door, with a half-formed intention of setting out on a wild-goose search for his uncle's carriage through all the streets of the town, when the man stopped him. He knew that Hugh ought to be at the Academy. He had seen the four cousins set out not two hours before; and Hugh's unexpected return in such a state of anxiety and agitation, made him fear that an accident of some kind had happened. He was much relieved by Hugh's explanation.

"You should leave a message for Dr Grahame," he said. "He has appointed a gentleman to meet him

here at twelve o'clock. He must be back then at any rate."

Hugh caught eagerly at the suggestion; and, learning that his aunt was in the drawing-room, he sprang upstairs, two steps at a time, and dashed in upon her in such hurry and eagerness as to alarm her, so that it was some minutes before she could be made to understand his breathless incoherent story. When she did understand, however, her kind motherly heart was at once interested, and she undertook to give Dr Grahame the message as soon as he came in.

Hugh would have liked nothing better than to have spent the day by Charlie's bed-side, attending to his wants, and making amends for the neglect of his natural attendants; and, in passing down Howe Street, he paused a moment at the house, trying to persuade himself he might and ought to do so. But it would not do. He knew that he could be of little real use in the sick-room, and that his present duty was to attend to his school work, and he turned resolutely from the door, saying—

"Perhaps a case like this might be one of the little things in which poor Mr Home said his self-indulgence began; and Percy says, no man is worth anything who has not learned to say 'No' to his inclination. So here is a No, No, with all my might;" and he began to run, and never paused until he reached the door of his classroom.

Here, for the first time, it occurred to him that his master might be displeased at his long absence ; but he was so certain that he had done the right thing, that the reflection caused him no uneasiness. It only showed him the propriety of giving an explanation of his conduct ; and, accordingly, walking up to Mr B——, he gave it in his own straightforward, unembarrassed manner. Mr B—— looked keenly at him, to see whether he spoke the truth ; but, to Hugh, truthfulness was so much a necessity, that it never occurred to him his word could be doubted, and he met the scrutiny with such steadiness and unconsciousness, that Mr B—— was at once satisfied, and dismissed him to his place with a simple, “ You did quite right.”

“ See what it is to be a favourite,” one boy whispered to another. “ That humbugging story is believed.”

Mr B—— overheard the whisper, and walked up to the speaker.

“ You are wrong, Brown,” he said ; “ you ought rather to say—See what it is to be a lover of truth ? That M’Leod is, in the fullest sense of the word ;” and he laid his hand, approvingly, upon Hugh’s head. “ He is not one who merely prefers the truth to a direct falsehood, as all of you, I hope, do. But he has, at all times, a hearty wish that the truth should be fully known. I have not forgotten, my boy, how, when you let the burning stick fall upon my desk, you came at once to tell me, and when I excused it as an accident,

you reminded me, that although the injury to the desk was an accident, still, in playing with the stick at all, you had disobeyed a positive command."

Hugh Grahame and Edward looked more proud, and pleased at this praise of their cousin, than he did. He could not understand how he could have acted otherwise, and only wondered that Mr B—— had not forgotten the whole affair long ago.

Kenneth and the two Hughs called at Mr Home's door to ask for Charlie. Kitty answered the bell. Her mood was quite changed since the morning. She was now dolorous in her lamentations over her poor, dear Master Charles, who was very ill, she said; and no wonder, when he had been sent out in the cold weather to that nasty riotous school, when he was no more fit for it, poor, sweet lamb, than a new born baby.

Hugh, indignant at the inconsistency of such complaints with her scolding salutation to Charlie in the morning, would have given her a piece of his mind, if the more prudent Kenneth had not dragged him away, saying, in complimentary style, when they had got out of hearing of Kitty—

"Are not you an old blunder-head? What good could it do to irritate the only person from whom poor Charlie can look for kindness?"

The M'Leods went home with Grahame, in the faint hope of finding their uncle, and hearing more particulars about their friend. Hugh Grahame told them it was the

most unlikely thing in the world that his papa should be at home at that time of the day. But, for once, the most unlikely thing in the world took place. Dr Grahame's carriage drove up, while they were waiting for the door to be opened. He seemed at first unwilling to say much, but when they pressed him with questions, he confessed that he thought the boy so ill, and with so little strength to stand a severe illness, that he could not help being alarmed. Next day the report was still more unfavourable, and, for more than a week, Dr Grahame had little hope of his patient's recovery. After that he began to amend, and his progress, though slow, was steady.

The two Hughs were admitted to see him sooner than Dr Grahame would have permitted in any other case. But he was sorry for the lonely life the poor sick boy led, and could not refuse his earnest request to see his friends. Every spare hour Hugh had was spent in the sick-room. And when the Christmas holidays began, he devoted to Home two hours daily, that being the limit Dr Grahame had set upon his visits.

These two hours were not always given without a sacrifice. A hard frost had set in, and all the ponds about Edinburgh were in good skating order. Kenneth and Hugh were first-rate skaters. They had been early taught by their father, who had been quite famous for his skating powers, and they far excelled all their companions. Besides the mere pleasure of the exercise, of

course every one likes to do what one does well. Hugh was as keen about skating as he was about all his plays. And on the fine frosty forenoons, when a large merry band was setting out for Duddingstone Loch, it did require a considerable degree of self-denial to turn a deaf ear to all their solicitations and specious reasonings, and to go down to the dingy back room in Howe Street. True, he could and did join them after he had given Home his promised two hours' visit. But his solitary walk was a very different thing from the mirthful progress of the gay, expectant band, who had gone before him. And as the spirit and zest of any amusement lie generally in the first two or three hours, so Hugh often found even the good skaters had grown a little languid before he joined them, while the inferior ones had generally got discouraged and given up.

Hugh was too generous to allow his friend to see how much the visit to him had cost. But the third day of the holidays was so bright that the sunshine made itself known even in the dingy sick room, and suggested to Charlie to ask what the other boys were doing on this fine day. Hugh answered briefly, that they had gone out to Duddingstone.

"And do you not skate? Do you not like skating? Did you give it up for me?" were eager questions, which Hugh found it difficult to answer.

"I did not care—that is, I did not like—that is, I

wished—I mean—” he said, colouring more and more under Charlie’s anxious, inquiring look.

“O Hugh, you have given it up for me, and I don’t like you should,” he cried.

“And I do like,” Hugh answered, laughing. “That is all the difference. But never mind, Charlie,” as he saw that his friend was really distressed, “you know I can go afterwards. And as to the little giving up in not going with the others, it is all very good for me. It helps me to follow your uncle’s good advice, by giving me an opportunity for getting the better of my great passion for all kinds of fun.”

“What advice did my uncle give you?” Charlie asked, in some surprise. Advice was the last thing he should have looked for from such a quarter.

Hugh described the little scene. Charlie was much interested.

“Oh, I am glad you have told me,” he cried. “It makes me feel so differently towards him. All my life I have only been afraid of him, and wished to keep out of his way—as much when he was good-natured as when he was cross—because he was always so rough. But now I shall feel sorry for him, and I shall be glad to feel it.”

“And it was really such good advice,” said Hugh, “you can hardly think how many times it comes to me to be used. His saying that it was in little things that his self-indulgence began, has made me pay attention to

many things I might have thought too little to be wrong; or even that, perhaps, were not wrong in themselves, only in being done at such and such a time. I mean, like finishing an interesting story when some one wanted me to do something else, or putting away my lessons half learned, because I wanted to try a new way of making hard balls. By the by, I have got such a famous way to teach you, Charlie."

"Or going out to skate, instead of coming to see me," Charlie added, passing over the interesting interlude at the end of Hugh's speech.

"Oh, well, it is all in the way of the day's work," Hugh answered, laughing. "You know, if we are ever to get the command over our desires and passions, we must begin now when we are schoolboys. And no man can ever be sure of being able to go right steadily on to do his duty with all his heart unless he has first got the better of all his inclinations, so that none of them shall dare to speak without his leave. O Charlie, I could not bear to be the slave of my own desires. It would be weak and mean to be so. Remember, 'Britons never shall be slaves.' You should be glad of anything that can help me to be the free master of myself."

"I can't be glad to be the disagreeable means of helping you to it, though; I don't like to be a bugbear," Charlie said, half sadly.

"O Charlie, don't you think I like to be with you?

Are not we friends? It is not fair to say that," was Hugh's reproachful answer.

"Yes, yes; I know you do like to come to me, Hugh. But could not it be at another time? Why not in the evenings? That would suit capitally, would it not?"

Hugh made a doleful grimace.

"Oh, don't you know, Charlie, that every night now has got a tea-party to itself? To-night is the first of them."

"And do you not like tea-parties?" Charlie asked, laughing at Hugh's expression of disgust.

"I am sure I don't know. I never was at one in my life. But I can't in the least fancy what people find to do at them. We can't drink tea all night, I suppose."

"Oh, there are generally games of some sort."

"Games! What kind of games can we have in a drawing room, Home?" Hugh asked, a little perplexed.

"Oh, not games such as you mean. Not romping, running games. But quiet games, played when people sit upon chairs. 'The Traveller,' or 'What is my Thought Like,' or 'Magical Music,' and so on."

"'The Traveller,' 'Magical Music!'" Hugh repeated, with such a look of bewilderment that Charlie burst out laughing.

Charlie explained how the games were played. But the description did not sound very enticing to Hugh, and he sighingly declared he should like fifty times better to spend the evenings with Charlie. As this

could not be, however, and as Hugh positively declined Charlie's proposal that the visits to him should be given up while the frost lasted, the next proposal was that Hugh should go out with his friends, enjoy the best of the day and the best of the fun, and come in in the afternoon when the skaters were beginning to get fagged. Hugh had fancied that Charlie slept in the afternoon. But when he found that this was not the case, he gladly agreed to the amended plan of proceedings. And, thanks to Kenneth's watch, and to Kenneth's care to keep him to his time, no day passed in which Charlie did not get his full two hours' visit.

The visit was the bright spot in the sick boy's lonely day. And to Hugh, too, they were a real pleasure. In peace and quietness, safe from all contact with his rough school-fellows, and still rougher uncle, Charlie's manner lost much of its excessive timidity and depression. He showed that a quiet love of fun was by no means wanting in his character; and the gentleness, the unselfishness, the generosity of his natural disposition had been so increased by his deep religious principles, that it was impossible not to love and admire him, when he allowed himself to be known—when the oppression and reserve of timidity were removed from his spirit, so that he was not afraid to express his feelings and thoughts. Hugh soon loved him so much as to forget there had ever been a time when he had thought his wish for friendship a bore. And although I have carried on my chapter of

Repentance thus far, yet, in truth, long before this period real liking had taken the place of repentance in stimulating Hugh to show kindness to his sick friend.

Charlie's recovery was steady up to a certain point. But after he was able to get up and leave his room, it seemed to come to a stand-still. He did not gain strength; Dr Grahame sometimes thought he rather lost than gained, and he became anxious about him. The house was dull, and not well-aired, and there was a great want of all the kind care and attention a mother would have given to the weak boy. The worry of his meetings with his uncle excited him, and distressed him at the same time. And now that the boys were again busy at school, and could pay him only short visits, there was nothing to cheer him. Dr Grahame thought a change was necessary. But to get the change was the difficulty. Charlie had no near relations to take him to their house; and even if the season of the year had not been as unfavourable as it was, Mr Home could never have been brought to listen to any plan of country lodgings that would have involved expense. Dr Grahame had made up his mind to invite him to his own house, although dreading for him the noise of his many riotous children, when a more promising invitation was given.

Charlie and his illness had naturally taken a conspicuous place in Hugh's letters. The Birkenholme party were fully informed concerning him, and much interested in him, Mrs Grahame peculiarly so, because she dis-

tinctly remembered his father, a pale, delicate lad, whom her son Edward had often brought home to spend part of his holidays with him. As soon, therefore, as she understood the peculiar disadvantages of the boy's present position, she wrote to her son, as his physician, to suggest that a visit to Birkenholme might be of use. It was the very thing Dr Grahame could have wished for. At Birkenholme the poor boy would get all the affectionate care and kindness his case required. The air was pure, and not too keen. He might be able to walk out in the sunny, sheltered garden many a day when he could not have faced the sharp east winds of Edinburgh. And even when confined to the house, it would be a large, airy, cheerful house, to which he would be confined, and where he could have the variety and amusement his present home so sadly lacked.

The only difficulty was the journey, and that was a difficulty both for the risk of cold and for expense. As to the first point, Dr Grahame was the less concerned, that the weather just then was very mild—too mild, indeed, for the end of January. But the other was a more serious matter. It was an expensive journey; and how to persuade Mr Home to part with the necessary funds.

Hugh was chosen ambassador on the occasion. All through Charlie's illness, when any comfort or luxury was wished for, Hugh had always been appointed to negotiate with Mr Home, and always with success. The softened feeling displayed on the first memorable

occasion had speedily passed away ; but it had left behind in Mr Home's mind a strange kind of liking for the boy who had excited it. He liked to amuse himself with Hugh, to tease and plague him, and then watch the sudden change in the impulsive boy's manner when the favour of which he had begun to despair was suddenly granted.

On this occasion it was arranged that Hugh should call on his way home from school, as he had then a good chance to find Mr Home in the house. Dr Grahame had cautioned him not to let Charlie know what was in agitation until the matter was fully settled ; and, with a proper distrust of his own powers of concealment, Hugh avoided seeing the nephew at all until after his interview with the uncle. With elaborate caution, he went up another street, so as to approach the house from the south, while, if Charlie were watching for him, it would be as coming from the north. He crept along close to the railings until he reached the steps, then darted up them, hastily rang the bell, and concealed himself instantly in the doorway. His voice in asking for Mr Home was so studiously low that the servant could scarcely hear him, and he stole past the dining-room door on tiptoe, with most laughable care and anxiety.

He found Mr Home in the study, writing.

"Well, Mr Impudence," he said, "what brings you here?"

Hugh's speech had been carefully studied, and came

out with a formality and glibness which at once enlightened Mr Home as to the true state of the case, and prepared him to expect some important request.

“If you please, sir, I come to say that my uncle thinks you are hardly aware of the state in which Charlie is just now. He thinks him very weak, and that he is gaining no strength, and that unless some change takes place soon, it is very doubtful whether he will ever recover.”

Mr Home’s very cool and indifferent “Ah, indeed,” startled Hugh at once out of his proposed track, just as Mr Home meant it should.

“It is easy to say ‘Ah, indeed,’” he cried, indignantly. “But is nothing to be done for him? Is he to be allowed to get weaker and weaker, and perhaps die, without any one trying to help it?”

“I should think these were questions for his physician to answer,” Mr Home said coolly, dipping his pen in the ink, and going on with his writing.

“Well, but, sir—but, Mr Home, will you listen, please?” in a more persuasive tone. “Uncle Edward thinks he should have change of air and scene; and grandmamma has written to ask him to go to Birkenholme; and Uncle Edward thinks it would be the very thing to do him good.”

“Very interesting pieces of information, I dare say; but I don’t exactly see how they interest me.”

“Only you know,” somewhat confused by the gentle-

man's great coolness, so different from his usual blustering manner,—“only you see, you know, we wished to know if you were willing he should go.”

“Since you are so kind as to tell me this is your wish, I know it now; but you are mistaken in supposing I either knew it or saw it before,” with great suavity.

“Tut, bother, I can't take care of every word,” Hugh said, half-vexed, half-amused. “But, any way, please say, Mr Home, have you any objection he should go?”

“None at all. His society is not so very amusing as that I cannot do without it. And now,” half rising, and making a most courtier-like bow, “as I suppose your business with me is over, might I venture to hint that I am very much engaged this forenoon, and should be glad to have my room to myself.”

“But no—But, Mr Home, that was not my business at all,” Hugh cried, in despair.

“Oh, did you not, after all, desire to have my consent? You may perhaps remember I hinted as much a minute ago,” with the same elaborate courtesy.

“Oh, well, of course I did; that is, we did want to ask your leave. But—but”—hesitating how best to frame his request, until utterly confused by Mr Home's studied air of polite attention, he blurted out, “You know Charlie cannot go without money to pay his seat.”

“Ah, indeed! And you are impressed with the conviction that this piece of information concerns me, are you, my young friend?”

"Why, of course. Because we want you to give him the money."

"Ah, indeed!" He had by this time reseated himself and resumed his writing. Hugh waited a minute for a further answer, and then asked, impatiently,

"But, Mr Home, you have not said, you have not told me. Do you mean to give me the money?"

"My dear young friend, I wait to hear what advantage it will be to me that my nephew should go to Birkenholme. I cannot do you the injustice to suppose you have come to make such a demand without being prepared to give reasons why I should comply with it."

"Why, I have told you, sir, that Uncle Edward thinks it is the only thing that can save him. Did not I tell you that? I meant to do so."

"You did mention that supposed fact. But permit me to hint that there is a slight failure in your reasoning here. You may have shown that there will be an advantage to my nephew; but not, unless I have stupidly forgotten your statements, that there will be any advantage to me."

Hugh stood for a minute in utter perplexity as to what he should say or do next. He might have tried that way to Mr Home's better feelings upon which he had once before so unexpectedly struck. But although he had, ever since that day, felt a kind of liking for Mr Home, because of the agitation he had then shown, he had all a schoolboy's horror of a scene, and resolutely

kept down all indignant remonstrance, from mere dread of again arousing the remorse which had then been so useful. A bright thought struck him, and he cried, eagerly,

“Oh, but you know, Mr Home, while Charlie is at Birkenholme, he won't have to take that medicine, which you say costs so much, nor the wine and jellies, which Kitty is every now and then grumbling about. The price of his seat in the coach might be soon paid from these things.”

“Capital!” cried Mr Home, at once resuming his usual manner, and throwing himself back in his chair to enjoy a hearty laugh. “So the indignant champion of all virtue has come down to a matter-of-fact calculator of pounds, shillings, and pence. Well, you deserve something for that sacrifice of the grand tone of fine feeling, and all that.”

Hugh coloured with vexation to be so laughed at. But to see Mr Home's hand go towards his pocket, enabled him to bear the insult in silence. He feared to injure Charlie's cause by one hasty word. The hand stopped, however, before the money was brought forth, while Mr Home said, in a tone of reflection,

“But, after all, let me see. It strikes me you are going on a little too fast. If I don't allow Charlie to go, by your account he cannot live long; and if he dies, you know I shall be spared all expense at once, and for ever.”

Now must the indignant remonstrance have burst forth, if it had not happened that Hugh caught a watchful glance which Mr Home directed upon him from the corner of his eye. The quick-witted boy at once understood that the other was trying to provoke him into anger, and, with this conviction, he was able to answer calmly, even carelessly,

“Oh, that is a long look forward. You might calculate, on the other hand, that our Birkenholme people might take a fancy to him, and keep him long enough away from teasing you, or costing you anything. And when he is grown up a clever, wise man, you shall be glad enough to have him for a nephew.”

The last prophecy was curiously enough fulfilled. Not that Charlie ever became a strikingly clever man; but a good and a wise man he did grow up, and to his poor uncle, grown old before his time, broken down by disease, and unable to enjoy the only pleasures he cared for, Charlie became the one comfort of his life, soothing his hours of pain, amusing his hours of loneliness, waiting upon him with all the tender care any son could have given to the most affectionate parent, to whom he had to repay all the love and tenderness of a life, and watching with earnest loving solicitude for opportunities to lead the erring man's thoughts to the only true source of peace. Yes, Mr Home, Charlie was to live to be your happiness in this life, and, under God, the means of your happiness in the world to come.

But this is a digression. We must go back to Hugh, whom we left standing before Mr Home, watching with eager anxiety the motions of that hand which has again sought the money-pocket. Perhaps in the little start Mr Home gave, as Hugh smilingly prophesied Charlie's future, there might be a touch of awakened feeling. At any rate, he now drew forth a handful of silver, and asked Hugh what he wanted.

Hugh anxiously measured the heap of silver with his eye. He understood Mr Home well enough to know that no second visit to the pocket would be made if the first one had not brought out enough, and he feared that, in that case, the whole might be thrust back to its abiding place, and his mission, in the end, be unsuccessful; so, while he was slowly answering, he was calculating what part of the sum he and Kenneth could supply, supposing that glittering heap should be too little.

"The fare for an inside seat—and Charlie can't go out—is a pound," he said, adding, after he had seen the twenty shillings counted out without exhausting the store, "and please, Mr Home, he must have four-and-sixpence for the guard and coachman; and," still further emboldened by the readiness with which this was given, "he must have a hackney coach, you know, to take him to the office. You know he can't walk so far."

"How much for that, you extortionate dog?" Mr Home asked, laughing, partly at himself for yielding,

partly at Hugh, for increasing in his demands in proportion as they were complied with.

"Half-a-crown;" and "oh, thank you, Mr Home; I am so glad," was Hugh's answer, as he closed his hand upon the money so earnestly desired, but at one time so little expected.

"You look as glad as if it were for you to spend," Mr Home said, holding him back for a moment to look into his bright face.

"Oh, a great deal more glad; for I don't want anything, and Charlie does so want good fresh air," Hugh said, laughing in the overflowing joy of his heart.

So soon as he was released he hastened from the room and the house to where Kenneth and Hugh were waiting for him to learn the issue of his mission, and to share in the pleasure of telling Charlie.

They came back together, and found poor Charlie in sore need of cheering. This had been one of his worst days. He had been feeling very weak and wearied all day. Unable to care for his book, and with no other amusement to turn to, his one source of comfort all day had been the looking forward to Hugh's promised visit. At three o'clock he had stationed himself at the window to watch for his friend. As he had naturally looked down the street, he had not seen Hugh come from the opposite direction; but when group after group of school-boys had gone past, and no Hugh, and now the street was again quiet, he had gradually come to

the disappointing decision, that something had happened to keep Hugh from school, and that there was now nothing to expect in the long afternoon and evening.

He had just returned to the seat of which he was so weary, and taken up again the book of which he was so weary, when the door-bell rang. The door was opened. There was a sound of boys' voices, and before he had time to ask himself, could it be his friends after all? Hugh rushed in, and poured out his news in such an overwhelming torrent, as completely carried away poor Charlie's comprehension. He could only understand that Hugh had, in some mysterious manner, got possession of a little heap of shillings and sixpences, which he was displaying with a frantic triumph, and that Mr Home had given his consent to something which had some inexplicable connexion with Mrs Grahame at Birkenholme, and Uncle Edward in Charlotte Square.

Hugh's eager questions, "Are you not glad? Is it not delightful?" were met by a look of hopeless bewilderment; and when he asked, half angrily, "Why do you look so grave? Don't you want to go?" poor Charlie could only answer, that he really did not understand anything about it.

"And no wonder," cried Kenneth; "who could understand such a rigmarole as that? Come, Sir Hugh, quiet down your ecstasies, and tell your tale in a decent manner, or I'll take it out of your hands and tell it for you."

Thus admonished, Hugh made a mighty effort to

compose himself, and told his story this time with an elaborate slowness, as provoking to his expecting friend as his former vehemence had been stupifying. But when he fully understood the import, poor Charlie's joy was quite great enough to satisfy even Hugh.

"To go to Birkenholme!" he cried, his cheeks flushing scarlet, his eyes dancing, "to that beautiful place—to all these kind people. To see your Lizzie and Kate. O Hugh!"

"And dear, good grandpapa and grandmamma, and Jamie and Maurice, and dear old Boy, and our beauty and our pet, Johnnie! O Charlie, how I wish I were you," cried Hugh, with a forced laugh, which might easily have turned to tears, so sore was the longing which had seized him.

"Oh, I wish you were going too. It does not seem fair that I should have all the happiness, while you are left behind," Charlie said in a tone as if he half grudged himself a pleasure his friend could not share.

Hugh readily guessed what he felt, and hastened to turn his thoughts in another direction, by speaking of the business arrangements of the affair. He asked if Charlie could go on the following day.

"No," said Kenneth; "Uncle Edward said he must have to-morrow to get quietly accustomed to the prospect, and to prepare for the journey without hurry or bustle."

"And Kitty would never forgive me if I were not to

give her at least a day to get my things ready," Charlie said, smiling.

"Well, Friday then," said Hugh. "And shall we take your seat? Here is the money all right;" and he exhibited it again in triumph, and began to count. "That is the four and sixpence for guard and coachman, and this is the half-crown for the hackney coach to take you to the office. Shall we order it? You start at eight, shall we tell the man to be here at seven? Better be in good time."

"In good time, truly," cried Hugh Grahame, laughing. "Why, Hugh, do your south-country horses take an hour to go a mile?"

"I did not know how long your Edinburgh snails might take," retorted Hugh. "But when, then, should the coach be here?"

"Oh, there is plenty of time to settle all that. You are not going to order the coach now. Come away, and leave Charlie a little peace," said Kenneth, who saw that, after the great surprise and excitement, the present noise and bustle were too much for Home. In his weak state, he could not bear strong feelings of any kind, and Kenneth saw that his hand was shaking, and tears rising to his eyes, without his being able to understand their cause or to check them.

"Go now," Hugh cried, in dismay, resisting Kenneth's gentle push. "Why, I have not told Charlie a quarter of the things he has to see and to do."

"You can tell him to-morrow. You must come now," Kenneth decided. "Hugo, take his other arm and drag him away."

And so poor Hugh was dragged out of the room, expostulating and looking back, and giving incomprehensible messages and directions.

When they were safely in the street, Kenneth tried to make up to Hugh for having shortened his visit by praising the skill he had shown in his mission to Mr Home, and the prudence which had provided so well for all Charlie's wants.

"I never thought you would get money for the hackney coach."

"No," cried Hugh Grahame; "I thought you and I were to pay that, Hugh."

"I did not expect to get it," Hugh answered, with some exultation. "I did not mean to ask it. But you see, Mr Home was more ready than I expected. And I thought it was best to get it; and our half-crown can get something else. Poor Charlie wants so many things—things that every other boy has."

Hugh Grahame readily agreed, and suggested that a nice comforter, to keep him warm on the journey, might be a very good thing. Kenneth approved; but not so Hugh.

"A comforter was a very comfortable thing," he said; "but there are so many nicer things that other boys have and Charlie has not. And, after all, who ever cares for merely comfortable things."

"Every one who likes to be comfortable," Hugh Grahame answered, laughing.

But Hugh would not laugh. He could not accept the comfortable side of the question at all.

All the fellows laughed at Charlie, he said, because he had not the things they had. No clacken, no bat, no trap, not even a gully knife. And there was not a fellow of the class who had not a gully knife except himself. And their half-crown would buy a famous one.

A gully knife, I should tell my readers, was the Academy boys' name, whence derived I know not, for a large pocket knife with a rough handle, something like a gardener's knife, and which they prized above every other kind.

The case of "gully knife *versus* comforter" was not settled when the boys were forced to separate. But Elizabeth, chancing to hear of the matter, arranged it most pleasantly for them, by undertaking to knit Charlie both a comforter and muffetees as her contribution to his expected pleasures. The gully knife was, therefore, bought, and was a first-rate one. The hackney coachman's fare was found to be only eighteenpence, and Mr Home having refused to take back the extra shilling, three-and-sixpence fell to be expended upon this desirable article.

Every one seemed inclined to help to make Charlie comfortable. Edward sought out books for him to read on the way. Percy sent a warm fur cap, which he

had once found a great comfort on a winter journey. Aunt Jane, with her own hands, packed up a parcel of sandwiches and a small bottle of sherry and water. And when Hugh Grahame appeared in Howe Street on the eventful morning, he brought from his mother a soft hassock for Charlie's feet, and a little basket filled with grapes and sweet biscuits.

Of course the two Hughs and Kenneth went with their friend to the coach office. And our Hugh's excitement was a sight to behold. He made poor Charlie breathless by the red-hot haste in which he did everything, running here and there, stumbling over chairs and against tables, attempting all kinds of impossible feats, in hoisting up carpet bags and boxes after they got to the coach office, as if the starting of the coach had depended on him alone, and reiterating all kinds of impossible-to-be-understood messages and directions to everybody that came in his way.

It was too much for Charlie, overcome by the numerous tokens of kindness he had received, nervous about his journey, and his introduction to so many new people, fearful of not being liked at Birkenholme after all, and very down-hearted at saying good-bye to his two Hughs. So that, although he loved his friend all the more for his zeal in his service, he felt it a great relief when the coach door was shut for the last time, the coachman cracked his whip, and they were fairly off.



CHAPTER XII.

HUGH LEARNS TO BE MASTER OF HIMSELF.

FOR Hugh's proud, fiery temper was a constant source of trial to him. I suppose a love of teasing is characteristic of all schoolboys. Certainly Hugh's companions were no exception to the rule, and he offered only too tempting a subject for the exercise of this propensity. In his complete ignorance of schoolboys' ways, there was a fine field for ridicule. From being so unaccustomed to it, he found it very hard to bear, while in resenting it, he only laid himself open to fresh attacks, and taught his teasers where and how best to aim the next blow.

What made this teasing the more trying was, that he was the only one of the cousinhood, as they were called, who was exposed to it. Kenneth's dignity as a seventh class man saved him from many attacks of the kind, and his indifference to them saved him from still more. Hugh Grahame's temper was too sunny, Edward's too indolent, to allow them to be easily provoked. And George resented an injury so deeply, retained the recol-

lection of it so long, that none of his school-fellows cared much to meddle with him. Hugh was the only one of the five who presented exactly the due mixture of irritability and generosity.

And as he had no sharer of his troubles in brother or cousins, so neither had he any very ready sympathiser under them. Edward could not understand why he should take the trouble to get into a passion for such little grievances. Hugh Grahame, with all his warm love for his cousin, was generally inclined to be equally amused by the wit of the teasers, and the anger of the teased. George, unhappily, was only too well pleased to see Hugh mortified. And even Kenneth, while sorry that his brother should be vexed, could not quite understand the cause of the vexation.

One evening Kenneth came into the dining-room, where Hugh and Percy happened to be alone.

"Ah, here is the little hero of the day," he cried, putting his hand on Hugh's shoulder. "Do you know, Cousin Percy, this young gentleman has been pronounced by the Rector to be the best writer of Latin verses in all the three classes, and he in the lowest of the three, and almost the youngest in his class."

"Nonsense, Kenneth," Hugh said, almost pettishly. "It was only my to-day's verses that were best."

"Only! you unconscionable young dog," Kenneth said, laughingly. "Why, what more would you have. You surely don't expect to be always, or often better

than these seventh fellows, who have been hammering at Latin verses for three years. But, hey-day, what is wrong?" suddenly interrupting himself, as he perceived, for the first time, that the flush on Hugh's cheeks was not altogether that of gratified vanity. "What is the matter, Sir Hugh? Out with it, old fellow."

"You did not hear what those fellows—what that Blake said?" Hugh burst forth vehemently. "They said it was a fine thing to have a seventh class brother who was such a dab at making verses, that he could make his own and mine too."

In his elation at Hugh's triumph and eagerness to have it acknowledged, Kenneth was for a moment as angry as Hugh at this attempt to destroy it.

"Why ;" he cried, indignantly, "how did they suppose we had managed it, when the verses were written and given in before we left the hall?"

"Oh, they said it was a famous thing to be so fond of one's brother as to insist on sitting next him, and so close, as that a verse or two could be whispered into my ear at a time, or now and then a slip of paper thrust into my hand."

"What an extraordinarily clever fellow they must think me," Kenneth said, his anger melting away in a laugh. "Do they suppose I can carry on two sets of verses on the same subject at the same time? And one would think any way, that I would keep my best things to myself. Now, yours were better than mine."

"Yes, they said that you were precious angry when you found it out. That was one comfort, they said, that you were not likely to help me again; Blake said, he had seen the savage look you gave me while the Rector was flummerying me."

"Such stuff! if I looked at you at all, it was only to say how proud I was, and how glad."

"Oh, I know, Ken," Hugh cried, eagerly. "I knew how glad you were, but then they would not believe me. There was no use speaking to them."

"And did you not speak to them, then, Hugh?" Percy asked.

"I only told them," Hugh said, throwing back his head, and unconsciously mimicking his own proudly indignant air, "I only told them that to suppose another fellow would do so mean a thing showed how ready they would be to do it themselves."

"And, by taking so high a tone, you, of course, made them go on with their nonsense worse than before," Percy said, quietly.

"So high a tone!" Hugh repeated, warmly. "What tone could I take? What right had they to believe such things of me?"

"They did not believe it," in the same quiet decided manner.

"What right had they then to say it? It was all the worse if they said it when they did not believe it."

"Worse for them, but not for you. Now, Hugh, tell

me, after all, what harm did their saying it do to you?"

"Harm! Why, perhaps, no positive harm; but it was horridly disagreeable."

"Intensely disagreeable, I grant."

"And horridly provoking."

"Why do you allow it to be provoking?"

"Why, how can I help it?" Hugh asked, impatiently.

"By not being provoked by it?" Percy answered, coolly.

"Yes;" interposed Kenneth, "that is what I always tell him. It's nonsense to mind these fellows and their teasing."

"Oh," Hugh cried, with an impatient twist of his body, "it is easy for you and Cousin Percy to speak. You don't know what it is to be teased. Well," with an amusingly elaborate attempt to be resigned, "if grandmamma is right, and I have yet to learn not to care for what people say or think of me, I suppose all this may help me to learn it; but it is horridly disagreeable in the meantime."

"But, Hugh," interposed Percy, "you are quite wrong in supposing that I don't know what it is to be teased."

"Why," Hugh said, eagerly, "did your school-fellows tease you as they do me, when you were my age?"

"Not when I was your age. I was too well used to it by that time to mind it; and boys don't care to tease those who don't care for being teased. But when I first

went to school I was a shy, quiet little fellow, and my more boisterous companions used to tease me to a great extent."

"And did you get furious as—as—" with a conscious smile—"as I do?"

"No, that was not my temptation; I only got so exceedingly doleful that my father thought he should be obliged to take me from school altogether and give me a private tutor."

"And did he?"

"No; my mother said that if I ever was to be worth anything, I must learn to bear ridicule, and that the sooner I learned the better."

Kenneth smiled to himself at this reversal of the position usually taken up by father and mother. Hugh was too much interested by the principal subject of discourse to remark any incidental ones. He asked what Percy did when he was not allowed to leave school.

"My mother was quite right," he said. "So soon as I saw that I could not escape from the disagreeables, I set about bearing them as I best could."

"But how?" persisted Hugh.

"By mere common sense; through mere policy. There is where your strength is greater than mine was."

"There! Where? I don't understand. But never mind that now; I want to know how sense and policy helped you."

"Good, wise Uncle John, who was always ready to

help us youngsters, showed me the policy of the matter. He made me see that the boys would give over teasing so soon as I gave over being teased. Remember, Hugh, there is no fun in teasing one who can't be teased."

"And pray," Kenneth asked, saucily, "how does one tease one that can't be teased?"

"I should have said, in trying to tease one who is not teasable," Percy answered, with a good-humoured laugh. "And Uncle John taught me to see, that if I could not prevent their liking to tease, I could at least make myself less teasable. He taught me to make myself first say, and then feel, that it did me no harm to be called Harry Longlegs. I was the strangest, thin spider of a boy in those days. And that, if I did not like to be called the knight of the doleful countenance, I must cease to look doleful."

"Well, but Percy, I really should not care to be called Harry Longlegs," Hugh remarked, looking down with complaisance on his own well-proportioned, sturdy limbs.

"Because you are not like one," Percy answered, laughing. "And even if you were, you are not the shy, sensitive, little, or rather, long shrimp I was in those days. You can't fancy how I used to dislike these names. How wretched it made me to think of meeting the boys in the mornings, and hearing the names shouted from one to another. I really think such name-calling was as bad to a boy such as I was, as your teasings are to you."

"No, oh no, Percy," both boys exclaimed, Hugh adding, "You know they positively say I cheat, and all kind of bad things, and, for all I know, they believe it too."

"Not for all you ought to know, Hugh. You must feel, from their behaviour to you, from the way in which they trust you at all times, that they can't seriously believe you cheat. However, I, too, had experience in those days of the misery of having stories invented about me. What absurd tales," laughing at the recollection; "one clever fellow used to tell, and some of the others really believed, that I used to faint through fear at my own shadow; that my mother had to hire a servant for myself, to go about with me everywhere after it was dark, who slept in the room with me, and was obliged to go to bed when I did, for that I would go into convulsions if I were left a moment by myself. And there used to be a most absurd caricature of me, with my long, sprawling legs, sitting on my nurse's knee, with a bib on, and she feeding me with porridge."

The boys laughed; but Hugh asked how Percy could ever bear it.

"It was difficult enough. For you know, to be so caricatured must have been disagreeable to any boy, much more so to one like me. With Uncle John's help I taught myself to look upon it in the same light as the cold shower bath, to which Uncle Edward had then condemned me, and for which I had a perfect horror. I braced myself to bear both as I best might, while they

lasted ; and when they were over, I forced myself to forget them as fast as I could, and to get rid of the discomfort attending them as soon as possible."

"But how?"

"I soon found that, after I had come out of the bath, the most foolish thing I could do was to stand shivering, grumbling, half crying, and allowing the nasty cold drops to trickle out of my hair down my face. I taught myself to move about briskly, to dry myself quickly, get on my clothes, and get out for the scamper, which used to make me all in a glow, and as happy as possible. So I saw that it could do no good to creep into a corner and brood over all the disagreeable things that had been said of me, until I made myself wretched, and afraid, and ashamed to look any one in the face. As I had learned to shake the wet from my face and hair, so I taught myself to shake the unpleasant recollections from my mind, and I found that to force myself to turn instantly to some amusing book, or to fill my mind with some pleasant expectation, was as good a way of banishing dolefulness from my mind as the brisk run was of bringing heat to my body. I cannot say I ever came to *like* either shower-bath or teasing, but at least I caused them to cease from being real miseries. And so soon as the boys found this was the case with the teasing, they gave over teasing me."

"Well, I do think you were a brave boy, though you might be a sensitive one," Kenneth remarked.

"Yes," Percy said, musingly. "I suppose a good deal of mental courage is necessary to force one's-self to look cheerfully upon evils of that kind."

Hugh coloured. Did Percy mean that he lacked that mental courage? Kenneth eagerly espoused Hugh's cause, and, in support of his assertion, that few boys had more moral courage than Hugh, he narrated several instances in which Hugh had boldly pronounced his judgment, and maintained his opinion against numbers of boys, many of whom were older than himself.

"Well," said Percy, laughing, "I don't quite think that Hugh requires courage to help him to do that. I think he rather enjoys such scenes. I think there is so much of a defiant spirit in his nature, that he is not in the least tempted to give way before superior numbers, or even before superior age. Edward thought that it was so brave of Hugh to speak to my father, as he did on that memorable day of the Burke story. I thought it only impudent."

"Then you really think, Percy, that I have not mental courage?" Hugh asked, in a mortified tone.

"I think you have naturally courage of every kind, Hugh. But I think, in this instance, you do not exercise it. In your snow-balling, wrestling, &c., the brave manly boy takes a fall, or a blow, pleasantly, and merrily. And so I think it is only brave and manly to take those mental disagreeables with at least as much indifference as possible. Face the trouble bravely, and manfully.

and make the best of it. Say, these boys will tease, and I can't prevent them; but I can prevent them from getting the better of my spirit. I can brace myself to let the breeze pass over me, while I rise up again as strong and firm as ever. I don't think, Hugh, that it is like a brave, manly boy, to suffer anything that another can say or do, so to affect you as to take from you any of your spirit or cheerfulness. A brave manly boy should be independent, and able to keep hold of all the powers that he has got, whether of body or of mind."

"They don't dispirit me, or make me doleful. They make me savage," Hugh said, innocently.

"Well, then, they take from you your good humour. I would not if I were you—leave any of my goods at their mercy, or in their power. I would never rest until I had secured myself, and all I had, against their attacks. It is a poor thing to let others make you cross, or savage, or anything, just when they like."

Hugh liked the spirited tone in which Percy spoke. It suited his ideas of a bold, strong man, that he should be able to hold on his own way undisturbed and undismayed. And he began to recall some of Kate's pictures of the dauntless, cheerful knights of chivalry, and to feel that they certainly would never have suffered themselves to be greatly moved by the ridicule or false charges of their foes. He was roused, by the mention of his own name, to attend to what Percy and Kenneth were saying.

"No," Percy said. "When I said 'that there was where Hugh's greater strength lay,' I meant, that while mere policy incited me to the effort, he had higher principles to incite him."

"Well, I don't see what higher principles have to do with me," Hugh said, abruptly. "As for the other fellows, they go against every principle of common fairness, to say nothing of higher things."

"That is their concern," Percy said, quietly. "Your business is to see that you do not go against principles of any kind."

"And do I? How do I?" Hugh asked, with a little indignation.

"Your own conscience must judge. Of course, I don't know exactly what you mean by being 'savage;' but I should think, seriously, that it is not quite the frame of spirit God wishes you to have, even towards those who tease you."

Hugh was silent for some minutes. He moved restlessly and uneasily from one foot to another, as he stood fitting the end of a paper knife he held to the veins and markings of the mahogany table, as if only intent upon ascertaining how far each deviated from a straight line. At last he looked up, and seeing Percy and Kenneth watching him, he smiled a conscious, blushing smile.

"If only these fellows would not make it so hard to do the right thing," he said, with a sigh.

“‘Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,’” Percy said, laying his hands on his shoulders, and looking down upon him affectionately and encouragingly. “A good soldier does not stop to think of difficulties and hardships. These he cannot help. All his concern is to keep straight on his way, and to suffer nothing to turn him to the right hand or to the left.”

“Like Greatheart, you know, Hugh,” Kenneth interposed.

“Ah, but it is so difficult for a schoolboy to be like Greatheart. There are so many little foes swarming in upon him on every hand.”

“But you know, Hugh, you are to see to it to be so master of yourself, master of all your passions, as that no one shall have power to drive or tempt you from the right road. Greatheart would not have been called Greatheart if he had kept straight on only so long as there was nothing in his way.”

“True,” Hugh assented slowly, and with a still deeper sigh. “Poor Mr Home told me I was to take no rest until I had learned to be master of myself, and I don’t suppose I am that, so long as I allow these angry, savage feelings to get the better of me. But, after all, it hardly seems as if a schoolboy can help getting savage now and then.”

“Ah, don’t take up that bad argument,” Percy said, quickly. “I can’t bear to hear schoolboys speak as if they had licence to commit certain sins—as if anger,

revenge, and such like, were not sins in them as much as in others."

"That is what you said, old King Ken," Hugh remarked, as if Kenneth's having said it gave additional force to the truth.

"It was so good what Charlie said about that the other day," said Kenneth.

Percy asked what Charlie had said.

"Oh, he is a fine fellow, Charlie," Hugh exclaimed, enthusiastically. "You don't know, Percy, how much and how well he thinks about these things. You tell Percy, Kenneth. I never can tell a story; I always tumble right into the middle, and then have to struggle out at both ends."

"Why," said Kenneth, "there is not much story. Only a day or two ago Hugh was reading one of mamma's letters to Charlie"—

"Charlie likes mamma's letters so much," Hugh broke in. "He says everything is so pleasantly put in them. And it is quite true; mamma's letters are amusing as well as good. Even the good bits are quite amusing. But you go on, Kenneth."

"Mamma had said that she could not understand why schoolboys should think it a sign of manliness to be rude and ungracious in their manners. She could not see, she said, why it should be thought manly to make one's-self disagreeable, and other people uncomfortable. And, above all, she could not understand why rudeness to

girls and women should be thought manly in a school-boy, when, if a man were to be other than courteous to women, he would be despised, and his society avoided by all true gentlemen. Then she went on to say, that the command, 'Be courteous,' was spoken to schoolboys as well as to others; and that, if schoolboys thought it was too trifling a duty for them to attend to, they must think themselves wiser than God, who had not thought it too trifling for Him to command. And then Charlie said, in his earnest way, 'Oh, if we once feel that every sin must be washed out in Christ's blood, surely we can't think the breaking of any one of God's commands a little thing.'"

"It was—it is the right way to look at the matter," Percy said; "and don't you feel, Hugh, that so serious a view gives you strength to fight against the wrong feelings that you feel for your teasers?"

"Yes, I do," he said, frankly. "Only, you see, when the teasing comes I don't find much time to think of anything except of being savage."

"True. I think it is after the teasing is over that you will get on best in fighting against the savageness. Instead of brooding over the unfairness and injustice of the teasers, and so making yourself more savage, try quietly to make yourself acknowledge the temptation they had to tease, and to understand how, without any very bad feelings, it was natural enough they should be amused by your anger and sensitiveness to ridicule.

Excuse them if you can ; and if you can't, shake off the thought of the whole business as quickly as possible. Don't allow yourself the luxury of self-pity, or you will never be able to stand the next teasing."

"The shaking-off plan is the best," Hugh said, laughing. "If I think of the matter at all, I suspect I can't keep myself from being angry. But, Percy," he added, more seriously, "the best thing you have done for me has been the reminding me that, in this fighting against wrong feelings, I am fighting the fight God calls me to—fighting as a soldier of Jesus Christ. That thought must make me more earnest—more afraid to give in."

"And must also encourage you, Hugh. You should remember that, in this warfare, we are not sent forth at our own charges. Christ sees to supply us with armour, and with strength and skill to use it."

Hugh was to be tried again sooner than he could have wished. On the very next day he had to pass through a scene similar to that of which he had complained, only this time the charge against him was more seriously preferred.

The dux of Hugh's class, George Gray, was a very clever boy, with more ambition and more keenness about his place in the class than, perhaps, any of his class-fellows. During the previous four years he had maintained his place as dux with little difficulty. But, as I have said, our Hugh was a very quick, intelligent boy. He had been carefully instructed—was, perhaps,

before most boys of his age ; and when once he had got accustomed to the novelty and bustle of the school, and had been aroused to tolerable diligence in preparing his lessons, he rose rapidly, soon established himself second, and was now coming to make Gray fear for the continued possession of his own place. Gray could not bear to be displaced ; and, while working harder than he had ever done before, he began to feel a certain dislike for the boy who was threatening to supplant him. Blake's laughing accusations of Hugh were received by Gray as true, because he wished them to be true, and he watched with jealousy for every opportunity of proving them, or of finding out others to prefer himself.

It so happened that, for arithmetic and mathematics, both Gray and Hugh had a particular aptitude. Until Hugh came Gray had been quite unrivalled in this class, and was his master's boast and pride. But these days were over. Hugh's genius for mathematics was greater than his own. Although Hugh had to begin the study while his class-fellows had gained some knowledge of it during the previous year, he soon made up his lee-way, and got on so well that Gray had to strain every faculty to keep pace with him. About this time the master had begun to give them exercises to work out at home—theorems, the mode of proving which they had to find out for themselves. Sometimes more, and sometimes fewer of the boys brought solutions of these exercises, but hitherto Gray and Hugh were the only ones who had

always succeeded. On this day the exercise had been so difficult that these two were the only boys in the class who had any answer to give in. Both had proved the theorem after a fashion ; but, while Hugh's mode of proof was pronounced to be the best, shortest, and clearest that could be devised, Gray was told that his was so roundabout and confused as to be almost as bad as a failure. Gray was intensely mortified, and all the more so because his companions teased him about it, and twitted him with being beat by a raw country boy, who had never been at school until within the last three months. Gray had been insolent in his hour of triumph, so that many were ready to exult in his defeat. Looking eagerly round for some solace to his mortification, Blake's mock accusation about the Latin verses occurred to his mind. As I have said, he had made himself believe it true, because he wished to believe it ; and from such belief it was comparatively easy to assure himself that to Kenneth Hugh was also indebted for the much-praised proof of this day's theorem. So, when the subject was again alluded to, he boldly asserted this as a fact of which he had certain knowledge.

It was after school, Hugh, Gray, Blake, and some others were in the class-room, gathering together their books, when Gray made this assertion. With some heat, Hugh denied having received the least assistance from any one.

"Oh, of course you'll say so. 'That is easy enough,'" Gray retorted, with a laugh.

“Easy to tell a lie!” Hugh cried, indignantly, adding, in a tone of intense scorn, “I am sorry for you that you should think so.”

The other boys had gathered round. Hugh’s vehement indignation, and serious way of refuting charges which were generally made in jest, had rendered this mode of teasing him a favourite amusement to his class-fellows—baiting the Highland bull, they called it; and many voices were now raised to support Gray and laugh at Hugh.

“Hear, hear,” some cried. “Here is the soul of honour! Here is the boy who cannot tell a lie, but can get others to do his exercises for him. Hear, hear this paragon of truth.”

With flashing eyes, Hugh looked round upon them all.

“Oh,” he cried, in his loftiest tone of superiority, “it is idle to speak to you. It is useless to argue with poor fellows like you, who really cannot understand that to some people a lie is an impossibility.”

Of course the strife of tongues only waxed louder after this speech. Blake, from pure love of mischief, led on the shouters, inventing and gravely giving forth most absurd stories of Hugh’s supposed cleverness in cheating and falsehood.

Hugh could not make himself heard. He disdained to run away from his tormentors, but stood, proud and silent, waiting until the hubbub should subside, so that he could speak. It was well he was forced so to wait.

He had time to think—to recollect his conversation with Percy, and to recognise the true nature of the feelings which were raging in his heart. And now, the tumult without him was as nothing to the tumult within. Burning anger, hatred, desire of vengeance, rose again and again, and were mightily striven against, and forced to hold their peace. Well was it for Hugh that he had been reminded where to look for armour in such a combat. So earnest was the cry, “Lord, help me!” which his heart sent up again and again, that almost it had passed his lips. Such a cry was never unanswered by the loving, watching Father in Heaven. Hugh was strengthened by a strength he could not but feel was not his own; and with the feeling of leaning upon One who was sure to hold him up, he could lift up his head and look calmly round upon his tormentors.

Already their shouting and laughing was beginning to cease,—not, perhaps, from exhaustion; it takes a good deal to exhaust a schoolboy’s power of lungs or of wit. But they could not help observing the changes of expression that passed over Hugh’s face; and in wondering at their cause, they naturally ceased to invent, or to utter the taunts which had so tried him.

So soon as they were silent, Hugh turned to Blake.

“I say, Blake,” he said, trying to speak pleasantly, “do you think it fair to treat me in this way? You do not believe what you say, but you make others believe it.”

"Do I not believe what I say? Dear me, M'Leod, that is a most curious piece of news," Blake said, in a mischievous tone, which was very provoking to Hugh. He strove hard, however, to keep his temper, and answered quietly, but firmly,

"No; you do not believe it. And I think you must feel that it is not fair to go so far as you have done, and make others believe it. I ask you, seriously, do you really believe that Kenneth wrote my exercise for me? And I think you are bound to give an honest, true answer."

Blake was in some measure impressed by Hugh's manly good humour. But the love of mischief was strong upon him. He could not resist it. Laying his hand upon his heart, in mock heroic style, he said—

"I hereby most solemnly aver, that I most fully believe that M'Leod More wrote M'Leod Beg's exercise."

Hugh turned from him without a word. It was all he could do to keep silence. And, in truth, the provocation to anger was great. In his own strength, Hugh could not have borne it.

The boys did not understand the full cause of Hugh's forbearance; but unconsciously they felt that there was real dignity in thus meeting such treatment. Their boys' sense of fairness was aroused to take his side; and several cried out that it was too bad; that Blake carried a joke further than he had any right to do; that it was shabby to go that length; and that he ought to tell

M'Leod that he did not really believe what he had said.

Blake felt the truth of their remonstrance, but was too proud to say so. With his own peculiar look, half mischievous, half laughing, he went after Hugh, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said—

“It would be of no use to say so. His high mightiness would not believe me.”

“Yes, I would,” Hugh said instantly, with frank good humour. “But I don’t want you to say it. It is enough if these fellows are satisfied that you really had no reason to call me a cheat. It was my own fault that you went so far. I provoked you by getting angry. But you see I am not used to jokes, and don’t understand them—you should have a little patience with me.”

Let schoolboys think and say what they like, such command of temper as Hugh had now shown was more manly than the most violent self-assertion could have been; and so Hugh’s companions felt it to be. Had he fought all the boys who laughed at him, they might have admired his skill and strength in fighting, but they could not have felt so much respect for him as they did now. Boys unconsciously feel that to be ready to avenge a wrong is a sign of weakness rather than of strength. Blake was quite conquered, and, giving Hugh a vehement shake of the hand, declared that he was a regular good fellow, and that nothing should induce him to tease him again,

“Don’t promise too fast,” said Hugh, laughing. “Better say only, Not till the next time. I shall get many a tease from you yet.”

And he was right. Many a time was Blake tempted to trying his joking powers upon one who had once been so open to them. But one such victory did Hugh the greatest good ; and, although often sorely enough tried, never again did it cost him so much to keep his temper as it had done this time.

Yes ; in this Hugh was beginning to get the mastery over himself, and the victory which he gained this winter was a victory for life. When he was a man, no sarcasm however pointed, no ridicule however clever, gave him half the pain, or tempted him so much to anger, as had done the taunting and false accusations of Blake and his companions.

But another victory he had gained over himself, even before that of which I have now written. His dislike of lessons and love of play were, perhaps, equally intense. Even with his father as a teacher—who had spared no pains to make his lessons pleasant to him—his hours of study had never been anything but a grievous burden. As we know, he had, on first coming to town, made very grand resolutions about diligence in study ; but he had gone little further than resolutions. Now and then, when a particular lesson took his fancy—as was the case with mathematics—or when he got keen about keeping his place, he would exert himself a little more than usual.

But his lessons were rather too easy for him. A small amount of diligence was sufficient to keep him up in his class; and every now and then, when a new game or an interesting story came in the way, even that small amount was not given, and he would go to school with lessons not half prepared, trusting to chance and to his own quickness to pick up enough to keep him from losing places, the only thing which he seemed greatly concerned about.

Uncle George remonstrated, Aunt Jane lectured, Kenneth scolded, and Percy gravely represented to him that, as a child of God, he ought to be more diligent in business—more conformable to the will of his teachers than other boys were; but in vain. Hugh felt the truth of all they said, acknowledged his fault, promised amendment, and then, at the first temptation, fell back into his old idle ways.

It was, after all, Mr Home's warning that worked a change. This warning had made a deep impression upon Hugh. With his old desire of being a great man still strong upon him, he had seen the wisdom of the advice, that he should give himself no rest so long as any one passion or inclination had the mastery over him. It was not to be expected that so heedless a boy should be very quick in finding ways of applying the advice. But whenever such application occurred to him, we must do him the justice to say, that he was wonderfully steady in carrying it out. In seeking to

reconcile Charlie Home to his losing the pleasure of going to skate with his companions, such an application had casually occurred. The words he had then spoken had made an impression upon his mind which did not pass without good fruit.

“Of course,” he said to his invariable confidant, Kenneth, “if I am ever to be worth anything, I must get the better of that absurd keenness about play. I am a fool and a baby to suffer a thing like that to get the mastery over me. And I don’t see how I can ever be a great man, or even a respectable man, if I cannot force myself to give up a game of ball, or to put down a new book, just whenever I ought. I say, Ken, I am ashamed of myself.”

And from being ashamed of himself, and scolding himself, he went on to keeping himself in order. His resolutions were not worth much, he said; and so to resolutions he joined self-punishment. The most frequent cause of his idleness was his being engrossed in making toys, little machines, models, or such things. He had a great genius for such manufacture; and when once he had begun anything of the kind, he gave his whole mind to it, so as to find it very difficult to turn to anything else. He determined, therefore, that whenever he found that any of these machines or models had been the means of making him neglect his other duties, the offending article should either be thrown away altogether, or laid aside for a certain time, the length of

which was to be determined by the greatness of the offence committed.

He did not trust to his own judgment or resolution in the carrying out of this plan, but appointed Kenneth as the executive officer, giving him full power to exact the penalty whenever he should see proper. Kenneth had sometimes a little difficulty, it is true, in convincing Hugh that the penalty had been incurred. In his eager devotion to the manufacture in hand, he was occasionally inclined to deny that any duty had been neglected. But when once Kenneth had proved to him that such really was the case, Hugh was more severe in fixing the degree of punishment than Kenneth would have been.

And the plan answered admirably. Not only were his lessons now prepared with a care which, as I have said, brought him to the head of the class, but he had also the satisfaction of feeling, week by week, and month by month, that he was getting to be the ruler of his own spirit, that duty was getting to be more and more easy, and that there was no overmastering inclination, whose existence was as a bugbear to him, warning him never to feel sure that he should be able to do what he knew to be right.

"I see," he said one day to Percy, "that even a schoolboy can be master of himself; because, you see, it is a schoolboy's fancies and likings that he has to rule over; and so even a schoolboy's strength is enough for it."

“Yes,” Percy answered; “and you know, Hugh, that to a schoolboy, as much as to others, is the promise, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you.’ It is wise and prudent to labour to get the mastery over yourself; but you should not forget that it is more than wise and prudent. This is work God gives you to do, and in which He promises His help.”





CHAPTER XIII.

COURAGE *versus* FOOL-HARDINESS.

MY good amanuensis, whose fair copy has kept pace with my ugly scrawl, has here interposed, with the remark that I have been too partial, and have hitherto made the younger brother too much the hero of my tale. I confess to the charge. Hugh is my hero. Kenneth is a dear, good boy; but, to tell the honest truth, he is rather too good for a hero. He is a quiet, thoughtful boy, fond of study, with a steadiness of principle and a depth of feeling uncommon in a boy of his age. Were I to write a history of his mind and heart—of what passes there, of the trials and struggles he has there to endure, and of the happiness he there enjoys—I might make an interesting story. But his outward life is calm. He has fewer temptations to do wrong than the impulsive Hugh, and gets into fewer scrapes and difficulties. There was, however, an adventure of which he was hero, which I must relate in this chapter. And, perhaps, my readers may agree with my

amanuensis in thinking, that as Kenneth is the elder brother, I ought to have brought this chapter in at an earlier stage of the book.

As I have told you, Jack Frost was so kind to our schoolboys, as to pay them a most timely visit during the Christmas holidays. He remained during the first half of January, but after that the weather changed, and there was a fortnight of rain, and close, warm days. In the beginning of February, however, the frost returned in increased rigour. A Friday night was the first of it. And many anxious mothers could not help wishing it had come either a little sooner, or a little later; for on the Saturday, when the boys were free from school, the ponds were most temptingly covered with ice, while yet the frost was of too recent occurrence to make that ice quite safe on the larger lochs.

Hugh M'Leod and Edward Grahame were, to their own grief, confined to the house with colds. But the other three cousins, with four or five favourite companions, were setting out for Duddingstone, when Mrs Grahame interfered.

They might, she said, try one of the smaller and more shallow ponds, but on Duddingstone Loch they were positively not to venture, unless Percy or their Uncle John could go with them to be judge of its safety, and as both Percy and Uncle John were otherwise engaged, the boys were obliged reluctantly to give up their plan.

They tried Lochend—a small loch to the north of Arthur Seat. The ice there was in good order, but the space was too limited for such swift, bold skaters as most of them were. Besides, the pond was covered with sliders of the class the Academy boys were pleased to call the blackguards, and the young gentlemen's dignity was hurt as their skating was spoiled by being jostled and pushed about among a crowd too numerous and too merry, to be overawed by the small band of aristocrats. So they soon grew tired of Lochend and its sliders, took off their skates, and proposed to indemnify themselves for their disappointment by a merry scramble to the top of Arthur Seat.

In the King's Park, however, they met a band of school-fellows, bound for Dunsappie—a small loch high up on the east shoulder of the hill, and, as the skating mania was still strong upon them, they readily agreed to join the party. Some parts of Dunsappie were quite shallow; and as the reeds came to the surface over its whole extent, Edinburgh schoolboys were in the habit of considering that it was in no part deep enough to be dangerous. At the time of which I write, however, this was a great mistake. There were deep holes in it, with a tenacious mud bottom, which rendered them particularly dangerous; and the very reeds, which made it look so safe, increased the difficulty of saving any one who might fall in.

When our friends reached the spot, they found a

large and noisy company of Academy and High School boys skating, sliding, shouting, and laughing, in a most alluring style, and they at once, and eagerly, began to buckle on their skates to join them.

"Hollo, Grahame; what are you after, old boy? Are you dreaming?" cried one of the boys, as he observed that Hugh Grahame was standing watching the others, with his skates hanging idly over his arms.

"I can't join you," he said, with a sigh. "Papa forbade me to go on Dunsappie to-day."

"What a shame!" cried several. "What a pity!" several more. "It is as strong as possible, Grahame. There is not the least danger."

"I don't think there is," Hugh said, laughing in his pleasant way. "I never think there is danger. But then you see I cannot help myself. Papa was quite distinct and positive in forbidding me. I can have no excuse for disobedience."

"Well, it is a great shame," said George. "I did not think Uncle Edward could be so cross. I daresay it was some of Aunt Margaret's absurd nonsense."

"Come now, George, you hold your tongue," Hugh answered, flashing with anger to hear his very indulgent mother so spoken of.

"Well, but it is really nonsense to be afraid of poor, innocent Dunsappie," resumed another boy. "Why, there is not enough of water in any part of it to drown a baby."

"Papa says that is a great mistake," Hugh said, eagerly, anxious to defend his father from the charge of unreasonableness. "He says there are very deep holes every here and there. And he says Dunsappie is so far more dangerous than Duddingstone, that if any accident does happen here, there are no ropes or safety-drags, as there are at Duddingstone, to help one out."

Kenneth had been listening attentively to what had passed, and now asked Hugh if his father really considered it unsafe to skate on Dunsappie.

"With a frost so lately begun, he certainly does," Hugh answered. "He has always said, he does not half like our skating upon it at all, unless when we have older people with us, and that he should even prefer Duddingstone to Dunsappie on a doubtful day."

"Well, then," said Kenneth, decidedly, "I don't think any of us should go on."

"Oh, nonsense, M'Leod. Surely you are not going to hen," cried one of his own class-fellows. "There is not the least danger, I assure you. The whole loch is as shallow as possible."

"But Uncle Edward says it is not," persisted Kenneth. "And he must certainly know better than we do. I shall not go on for one. And I don't think you ought either, George," and he stooped to unbuckle his skates.

"Thank you for nothing," George said, with an insulting laugh. "I am not bound to be a coward because you are."

"Oh, come, M'Leod, you must not fail us," pleaded his friend, adding, in a lower tone, "You see there are so many High School fellows here, and I should not like that they should fancy one of our seventh class wanting in pluck. Besides, they boast so much of the skating of that fellow Harris, and I know you could beat him out and out."

"I should like nothing better than to beat him," Kenneth answered, laughing, but at the same time hanging back from his friend, who would have drawn him on the ice, "But really, Douglas, I don't think it right. I am sure Uncle George would not like it. Indeed I can't go."

"Oh, let him alone," cried a merry English boy, darting off on a long sweeping curve, "he is only a canny Scot. He may be allowed to be a little afraid."

"I say, you, Edwards, hold your nonsense," was the angry retort of several boys near him. "As if the Scots could not stand up against the English any day. Come, M'Leod, you must show him you are not afraid. Stand up for the honour of your countrymen."

But Kenneth, though colouring highly at the word afraid, persisted in his refusal, repeating simply, that he could not, because it would not be right.

"I told you so," cried Edwards, dashing in among them again, and looking impudent and mischievous. "He is a cowardly Scot."

"No true Scot. At least no bold Borderer, as we

are," George cried, insolently. "He is only a chicken-hearted Highlander."

Although less keenly sensitive than poor Hugh on the subject of the Highlanders' character, Kenneth could not keep down the quick reply, given with flashing eyes—

"As if the Highlanders could not stand against the Lowlanders any day. When Lowlanders and English wished to get the better of we poor hillmen, they could only do it by such base treachery as made them a shame and a blot to our common country. The poor Highlanders might have fared better had they not had at least one quality of brave men, trust in the honour of others."

"Tut, nonsense! let us have no more palavering about Scotch and English," cried Douglas, impatiently, "say at once, M'Leod, whether you are willing to be counted a coward or not. Remember," more persuasively, "those High School fellows. Don't let them think one of us can be a 'hen.'"

"I am no coward, as you very well know, Douglas," Kenneth said, warmly.

"Well, then, say why you will not come on the ice like the rest of us. Is it because you are afraid?" with a scornful emphasis on the word.

Kenneth felt the emphasis sorely. His own class-fellows had gathered round him. A larger group of other boys stood on the edge of the ice. Every eye was fixed upon him, every tongue ready to pour out

scorn upon the boy who could confess he was afraid. With a strong effort he gave his reply, loud and clear—

“I am afraid.”

He could not have said more if he had tried, so instantaneously did scoff and jeer burst forth.

“Oh the great hen! Oh the big baby! Go home to your mammy, little darling, and she’ll tie you to her apron string! Poor innocent, where is its nursery-maid!” and so on.

Kenneth stood quite still, and looked calm and unmoved. But unmoved he was not. He suffered bitterly. In spite of his own better judgment, a painful sense of shame seemed to send the blood tingling through every part of his body. But he was strong enough to conceal his pain. And when the noise had somewhat ceased, he spoke again in his quiet distinct manner.

“I am afraid,” he said, “and I am right to be afraid. No one has a right to risk his life for the sake of an hour’s pleasure. That is folly, not courage.”

His own peculiar friend Douglas had turned to him again when he began to speak, as if anxious to hear him clear himself. But Kenneth’s words seemed only to irritate him more.

“Nonsense,” he cried. “Who wishes to risk his life? The cowardice is in supposing that we do risk it, in being afraid that the ice is not safe.”

“No,” Kenneth replied, quickly, “that is not cowardice, it is only believing that my uncle, who has known this

pond for twenty years, must know its real nature better than I can, who never saw it until two or three weeks ago, when it was covered with ice, when I had no means of knowing anything about its depth."

"But we tell you it is quite safe," said Douglas.

"I might be excused for supposing my uncle must know better than you do," Kenneth answered, with a smile.

Several of the skaters began to feel the reasonableness of Kenneth's trust in his uncle's knowledge. A good many eyes glanced at spots where the ice had cracked unpleasantly. A good many murmurs arose about people that had been drowned at Dunsappie. One of the older boys hastened to interfere, eager to stop a movement which threatened to destroy the spirit of their sport.

"Oh," he cried, contemptuously, "fathers and uncles are always holding forth about dangers that don't exist. They are always getting up some story to keep us from our fun."

"Of course I know nothing about your fathers and uncles," Kenneth answered, drily. "But I know my own are neither fools nor liars. I am sorry for you if yours are."

"Who said my father was a fool or a liar?" the boy asked, advancing furiously upon Kenneth.

"Yourself. He must be a fool if he believes there is danger where there is none, a liar if he says what he does not believe."

A laugh arose against Kenneth's opponent, for boys are quick to acknowledge the defeat even of their own champion. And daunted by the laugh, and by the conviction that neither mentally nor bodily was he a match for Kenneth, he turned sullenly away. Others took up the matter, and only anxious to keep their companions in spirit, dashed off on their skating without further argument, shouting out for all who were not hens and cowards, to follow them. And all did follow, those who were beginning to fear, being afraid to confess it.

Kenneth and Hugh stood watching them a little. But poor Kenneth's post was not pleasant. Every time the merry bands swept past, the older boys poured forth taunts and nicknames upon him, and the lesser ones went as far as they dared against so big a boy, by whisperings, laughter among themselves, and contemptuous glances. Hugh stood by his side, but did not share his disgrace. For Hugh had been positively forbidden to go on the ice, and any contempt his refusal might have aroused, was expended on the father who had forbidden him. But Hugh felt for Kenneth, and soon proposed that they should leave the scorers, and go down to see what was doing on Duddingstone Loch.

As they went down, they passed a gentleman speaking to two policemen, who immediately turned up the hill in the direction of Dunsappie.

"I do believe that gentleman has sent the police to warn the boys off the pond," said Hugh; "I observed

that he had been speaking to the fellows just as we came up to Dunsappie, and once or twice, while we were arguing, I saw him standing a little way down the hill, looking round in every direction for some one. I daresay he was looking for the police."

Hugh was right. The two cousins had not been long at Duddingstone before the other boys came pouring down the hill. Kenneth did not however profit, as might have been expected, by this confirmation of the wisdom of his decision. The boys were naturally enough irritated at having their sport interrupted, and they vented their ill-humour upon Kenneth, who had given the first check to their mirth. His own class-fellows held aloof from him with an air of contemptuous superiority, talking at him in voices carefully raised to reach his ear, but seeming to disdain to address him directly, even in reproach. And some of the High School boys followed him wherever he went, taxing their ingenuity to the utmost to invent new nicknames or new applications of old ones. Endless changes were rung upon the titles Hen, Missy, and Baby, at that time favourite epithets of Edinburgh boys; and a constant succession of cackling, squeaking, or baby-whining noises, were made to pursue him whichever way he turned.

George, who was really fond of Kenneth, was alternately in a rage with him and with his tormentors, but did not choose to share in his disgrace, by joining himself to him. Hugh, on the other hand, stuck steadfastly

by the persecuted, but felt on his account more bitter anger than any personal insult had ever been able to awaken in his sunny spirit.

"How can you stand that, Kenneth?" he cried at last, as some more insulting taunt reached their ears. "Why don't you knock some of these fellows down? You could do it so easily."

"Of course I could," Kenneth answered, drawing himself up, and showing the height of stature, the breadth of chest, the strong muscular frame, none of his adversaries could match. "And that is the very reason I would not do it."

"But I would if I were you, just for once, to make them hold their tongue," Hugh persisted.

"No, you would not. What, old fellow, would you strike a boy less and weaker than yourself, merely because you were unable to bear his laughing at you. Who would be coward then, do you think?"

"But fellows like these are not able to see that you are really brave in bearing all their ridicule so quietly," Hugh said, with a kind of bitterness. "If one could only make them feel that."

"Then there would be less to bear, and less need of courage to bear it," Kenneth said gaily, trying to conceal his own feelings for Hugh's sake. "However, there is no need to stay here to let them make fools of us. If you like, we can go home." And Hugh consenting, the two cousins went home alone.

They had a pleasant walk. Hugh had many questions to ask about Birkenholme. There was a plan spoken of for his spending part of the next vacation at his grandfather's. And he was not more eager to hear than Kenneth was ready to tell all about the place, its people, and its ways. Then, as they grew more and more confidential, Hugh was drawn on to speak in his simple but half bashful way, of that interest in religion so newly awakened in his heart. And Kenneth was so kind, so gentle, so ready to enter into all Hugh's feelings and difficulties, that he won the boy's perfect confidence, and was able to give him much help and comfort in the way he was only beginning to travel.

Kenneth would gladly have kept the events of the day from his brother's knowledge. But this could not be. Their return alone excited too much curiosity, too many questions were asked, and Hugh Grahame was too eager to tell all. Of course Hugh M'Leod's indignation was fierce against all and any who had dared to cast blame upon his own perfect Kenneth.

"What a set they are!" he cried, half contemptuously, half angrily. "What fools! What ninnies! To think there could be any merit, any courage, in rushing on to danger for no good purpose, without either rhyme or reason."

"Oh come, you stop that, Sir Hugh!" Kenneth said, good-humouredly. "You know if you had been there, I should not have been able to keep you off the ice, unless I had tied you, hand and foot."

"Oh well, perhaps I might have been keen enough about the skating," Hugh admitted. "But, any way, I should never have thought of calling any one who did not skate a coward, if he had as good reasons to give as you had. And I should never have dreamed of taking credit to myself for courage in going on."

"Well, but it was a kind of courage not to mind the danger," Edward suggested. "There was a want of fear anyway."

"A want of sense, rather," Hugh said, indignantly.

"A senseless want of fear," Hugh Grahame added, laughing.

Hugh M'Leod thought the matter too serious for a joke.

"Why," he went on, eagerly, "if you call a boy courageous who rushes into danger, without the least call to do so, and only because he is too presumptuous to believe that any one can know better than he does, what can you call the man who goes quietly and steadily on to danger, or to certain death, knowing perfectly what he is doing, but not the least bit afraid to do it because it is his duty. Are these two things," with great vehemence, "to be called by the same name?"

"I believe there is such a thing as fool-hardihood," Kenneth remarked, in his quiet, dry way.

"Ay, to be sure there is," Hugh assented, readily. "These fellows at Dunsappie were only fools, not heroes; hardly fools if you like, but still fools."

"I say, Hugh, do you remember that London boy who spent two nights and a day with us at Birkenholme last summer, and how grandpapa silenced his boasting?" Kenneth asked, suddenly.

"Oh yes! What was his name? I cannot recollect his name."

"Oh, never mind his name," cried Hugh Grahame. "Tell us what he did or said, that will be better than his name."

"His father was an old friend of grandpapa's, and the father and the son paid us a visit on their way to the Highlands. Of course it fell to us to entertain Joe, that was his name, Hugh. I don't think he had ever been in the country before, and he knew nothing about country things or ways. He was afraid of so many things. He would not go through the meadow where our own cows were feeding. He was sure there was a bull, and would not believe us, although we named them all over to him, and even gave him a particular description of the character of each one of the good old things. And then, a little after, he insisted on going into a field where there was a vicious horse, although we told him that we had been forbidden to go in. Who ever heard of a horse doing any one harm, he asked. Horses were quite different from bulls. And when we told him that the horse had nearly killed a man only two or three days before, and that grandpapa had applied to the sheriff for an order to the owner to shut him up, still he

persisted that horses never hurt any one ; that it must have been the man's fault, or there must have been some mistake about the whole story. So he went through the field, while Hugh and I went by the road. Fortunately the horse did not see him, so no harm was done. But, at dinner-time, he began to boast of his courage. And then the whole story was told."

"Ay, man," grandpapa said, in his quiet way, "you are a brave boy. I never knew but one braver, and that was a poor fellow they ca'd Daft Jemmie. No power could keep that lad from thrusting his hands into the fire whenever he had a chance of getting near it without being watched. And once, when some one took him to see a show of wild beasts, he was found trying to open the lion's den, that he might go in, he said, and speak to the poor beast that was all alone."

"Capital!" cried Hugh Grahame and Edward. "What did Joe say?"

"I don't think he quite understood the point of the story until his father said to him, 'Recollect that, Joe ! It is easy to brave dangers we do not understand ; but there is no courage in doing it.'"





CHAPTER XIV.

COURAGE VINDICATED.

FOR the next week or two Kenneth's position was an unpleasant one. He was too quiet and reserved to have been ever so universally popular as Hugh. But he had been universally respected. There was that in his character which his school-fellows could not help respecting and admiring. There was so much quiet, steady consistency in his way of going straight on to do what he thought right, so much simplicity in his desire to know the right, without thinking much about himself, or concerning himself at all about what others thought. And these qualities, joined to great natural abilities, had made him a kind of hero to the whole school, while, in the two or three with whom he was intimate, he had inspired a warm, enthusiastic affection.

But now, for a short time at least, all was changed. His personal friends held aloof. Those who had formerly envied him, were ready and eager to confirm any

prejudice which had risen against him ; and, as he passed through the play-ground, taunts, more or less direct, more or less loudly spoken, met him on every side. In spite of his independence of character, he felt all this sorely. But he bore it bravely—without murmuring, without bitterness.

And he was not a boy to remain long under a cloud of this kind. The force of his character could not but be felt. And with all his powers, bodily and mental, he was so unassuming, so gentle, and good, that he had fewer enemies than heroes generally have. Gradually the memory of his supposed weakness began to fade away, and even those who recollected it began to doubt whether it had really been a weakness. Kenneth, of course, had faults, but he had few infirmities. There was no littleness about him ; and, as his companions felt this, without fully understanding it, they began to return to their old allegiance to him as the first boy in the school.

Then, as the spring came on, and the older boys began to exchange their winter games for long country walks, Kenneth's company was more sought after than ever. He was the very boy to make a walk pleasant and amusing. The natural kindliness and considerateness of his character had been quickened and strengthened by that religion which teaches us not to "look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." He was ready to listen to, and to

understand the troubles of all, and even to feel for feelings of which he had little experience. For his age he had a great deal of information on all subjects. He never obtruded it on others, but was always ready to give it out for their benefit, in that pleasant sensible way which made one at once feel that a love of display had nothing to do with the matter. And, where jests and banter were the order of the day, his calm, equable temper made him take jokes as pleasantly as his shrewdness, sagacity, and dry humour made him singularly successful in inventing them.

One fine Saturday in March, Kenneth, with seven or eight of his class-fellows, set off on a long walk towards the Pentland Hills, with the avowed intention of finding a road none of them had ever gone before. For this purpose, when they were near the foot of the hills, they struck into a wild, overgrown road, which led them through some poorly-cultivated fields and broken waste ground, until they came to a stretch of the road, from whence there was no house or cottage of any kind to be seen. They were enjoying, with schoolboys' zest, the novelty of a position so difficult of attainment in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, when a sudden turn brought them in front of a large dilapidated house, which had every appearance of having seen better days. It was three stories high, and its front presented a goodly array of windows. But few of them had glass in them, and even the wood work of many of the sashes

was shattered, or altogether gone. The broad steps leading to the front door were worn and broken, and the once massive, handsome door hung helplessly back by one hinge. There had once been a shrubbery and garden round the house ; but a few stunted shrubs, with one or two tall trees, looking forlorn, deprived of their old companions, were the only remains of the one, and the extent of the other could be only guessed at from the fragments of its wall, which lay here and there in ruins upon its once fair borders.

The boys might have supposed the place was uninhabited, so desolate did everything look. But, as they turned the corner of the road, they had caught a glimpse of a man going up the door-steps ; two or three windows on the second story had the look of having been lately repaired, a thin curl of smoke rose from one of the chimneys, and a few articles of clothing were hung out to dry upon one of the shrubs.

The boys stood where had once been the gate from the road into the shrubbery, and they were speculating upon the probable history of the place, when they were all startled by a succession of piercing screams coming from the house, and presently two little girls rushed out, uttering wild, incoherent cries for help, clinging to each other, and looking fearfully back, as they ran tottering down the rough pathway—their staring eyes, and deadly pale cheeks and lips, giving evidence of the reality of their terror. They did not appear to see the boys, and

would have passed on, but Kenneth caught one of them by the arm, to ask what was wrong. The piercing shriek the poor child gave when he touched her, showed how great was the shock her nerves had received. But reassured by a glance up into his kind face, and perhaps also by the presence of so many tall lads where she had not hoped to meet with any protectors, she cried, in a voice broken with shuddering gasps and sobs—

“O sir! Oh, help our Lizzie! It’s daft Sandy. He’s gotten our Lizzie, and he’s gotten a big knife, and he’s gaun to cut her throat, and he has put the big poker in the fire, and he says he’ll burn the flesh off her bones. And daddy’s out, and mammy’s out, and there is nae-body there but Sandy. Oh, oh!”—breaking off with a shriek answering to one or two faint ones which at that moment were heard from the house.

“Get them to tell you where to go for help,” Kenneth cried, as he hastened up the path to the house. His friend Douglas ran after him, and caught him by the sleeve.

“Where are you going, M’Leod? You can do nothing against a madman. They are always so strong. You only throw away your own life.”

“I cannot leave the child in his hands,” Kenneth answered, breaking away from his friends. “Hark!” as another piteous scream reached them, “I must go. If none of you will come with me, go at once to seek help, and take care of the girls. I shall send him out of the

house if I can ;” and, without heeding the entreaties of the other boys, he hastened on.

None of them did follow him. Brave lads as they were, to go into that dreary, desolate house, to meet a madman armed with a knife, was more than they could do. The “coward” Kenneth went on alone, and, even in that moment of fearful peril, had such perfect command of his senses as to remember at once that it was only on the second story that they had seen any sign of inhabitants. He therefore went up without pause to the top of the second flight of stairs. Here he found himself in a long-shaped vestibule, into which several doors opened. There was now no sound to direct his steps ; but as he looked along the passage an open door at the farther end showed him at once the scene of danger. A child lay on the floor motionless. Poor thing ! she had fainted from extreme terror. By her side knelt the idiot, who, Kenneth could see, was a full-grown man. He was busy sharpening a large carving-knife upon a stone which he held in his left hand, grinning and chattering to himself the while. Kenneth’s blood ran cold at the sight, and for a moment he felt sick with horror. It was, however, no time for the indulgence of any weakness. Already had the madman thrown down his stone, and raising the knife in one hand, he seemed to be trying with the other to clear away the long, fair hair which hung round the child’s neck. Nerving himself to the utmost, Kenneth walked with a rapid, firm step

up the passage, calling out in a tone he strove hard to render easy and friendly—

“Eh, Sandy, man, what queer kind of game is that you are after now?”

Sandy looked up, but showed no surprise at Kenneth’s sudden appearance. With a fearful grin he pointed to the child, and said, in a chuckling, confidential manner—

“A queer game, man, you may say. Folk think I can do naething. I’m gaun to show them. I’m gaun to cut off the lassie’s head with a blow of my bonny knife. Wha do you think could do that but me?”

“Tut, man,” Kenneth answered, contemptuously, as he now stood directly facing the madman, “that’s nothing. Anybody could cut through that wee bit of a thing. Now, if you were to cut through this bed-post,” pointing to one beside them, “at one blow, that would be something to boast of.”

He kept his eye firmly fixed upon Sandy, as he spoke, and, while trying to amuse him and divert him from his purpose, he stood ready to spring on him, should he attempt to execute it.

Sandy looked uncertain. He glanced from Kenneth to the child, and from his knife to the bed-post. Kenneth’s eye so steadily fixed seemed to make him uneasy. His first, strong purpose was broken. He was more ready to follow Kenneth’s bidding. Kenneth saw his advantage, and pursued it.

"Come, man," he said, "try the bed-post. But I do not believe that poor knife could do it. Eh, man, if you had only a knife like mine."

"Have you a grand knife? Let's see it," Sandy cried, rising to his feet and coming eagerly up to Kenneth.

"Ay, ay. But first let us see what yours can do. Look here, man, this is the way to do it," gently drawing the knife out of the other's grasp. "We must get a good throw, and take a good aim," and, suiting the action to the word, he swung the knife back once or twice, as if preparing to throw it in tomahawk style at the post. As he did so, he stepped gradually back towards the window. Now he found himself near enough it, and, with a longer swing than usual, he dashed his hand through the glass, and let the knife fall into the court below.

"Run, Sandy, run," he cried instantly, before the idiot had time to be angry at the loss of his knife. "Run, and get it up before any one finds it. Make haste, or some one will come and stop our fun."

And Sandy, obeying the impulse of his hand, hurried out of the room.

As soon as he was fairly gone, Kenneth hastened across the room to secure the door before he should return. But a terrible disappointment here met him. Unlike other room doors, it opened outwards. There was no key, and the handle was so broken, that Ken-

neth at once felt it would give him no hold by which to resist force applied to pull the door open. He knew not what to do. He repented bitterly of having resorted to the extreme measure of throwing away the knife. He might perhaps have been able to keep the madman amused and in good humour until help came ; but now it was impossible to tell in what mood he might come back. Kenneth had heard the knife crash among the branches of a shrub, which he recollected to have seen under the window. If Sandy had much difficulty in finding it, the likelihood was, that he would get irritated. If he did not find it at all, it was almost certain that this would be the case, that then he would come back to wreak his anger upon Kenneth. Kenneth glanced round the room, and, as his eye fell upon the poker, now red hot in the fire, upon the heavy chairs and stools, and even upon the stone Sandy had used for sharpening his knife, it occurred to him that it might be safer to meet the madman, if he must be met, anywhere rather than here, where so many weapons for attack lay ready to his hand. There was no time for deliberation. He raised the child in his arms and left the room.

If he could reach the first story before the madman returned, he could conceal himself until the other was fairly up-stairs, when he could perhaps get out of the house, and with anything of a fair start, he trusted to his own speed of foot to save him, even should Sandy follow. But here again he was baffled. As he reached

the top of the stairs he heard Sandy enter by the front door. The risk of meeting him while encumbered by the child in his arms was too great. That plan had to be given up. Two alternatives remained. To hide himself in one of the rooms on this story, or to go up to the third. Kenneth chose the latter, although it removed him farther from the hoped-for succour, because he expected that the madman might search all the rooms on the second story first, and so more time would be given to allow help to arrive.

As they went up-stairs, Lizzie moved a little, and opened her eyes. Kenneth bent over her, and whispered to her, soothingly, that she was safe with him, but that she must make no noise. And the child, satisfied not to see the terrible Sandy, closed her eyes again, and lay quite still in his arms. Straight opposite the landing-place a door stood open. It opened the right way, and, anxious that Sandy should hear no noise to tell them where they were, Kenneth went into this room at once, set the child on the floor, and softly closing the door, placed himself against it in the posture best fitted for resisting pressure from without. Lizzie was now fully conscious, and in a low voice he cautioned her to make no noise.

Both listened breathlessly. They could hear Sandy go into the room they had left; could hear his angry mutterings as he knocked about tables and chairs, evidently seeking for them. Then they heard him go into

another room, and another. Kenneth's hopes rose high. Perhaps, nay, most likely, he would go down-stairs to seek them, instead of coming up. But, without Kenneth's being aware of it, one of the child's shoes had dropped off on the stairs. It caught the madman's eye. He had sufficient sense to follow up the track it pointed out, and with a yell of triumph, he sprang up the stairs.

Naturally enough, the door which had first presented itself to Kenneth attracted him also, and at his first trial, poor Lizzie's terrified scream gave him the information he required. With another yell, he applied his whole strength to force open the door. And now Kenneth experienced the truth of all that he had ever heard about the great strength possessed by madmen. Soon was the handle of the lock forced round, and then Kenneth felt that inch by inch he lost ground. He knew the struggle must soon be over, and he was despairingly and in vain casting his eyes round in search of some weapon with which he could defend himself and the child, when suddenly Sandy's efforts ceased, and his footsteps were heard going from the door.

Kenneth listened intently, hoping that some sound of people coming to the house might have caused the change in the madman's plans. But nothing was to be heard but Sandy's slow step as he seemed to be blundering about the passage, and other rooms, as if in search of something. Of course, Kenneth could not guess what would be his next proceeding, but he gladly took

advantage of the present respite to close the door again, and settle himself more firmly against it. Suddenly Lizzie gave a scream.

“Oh, the other door, the other door,” she cried, and, looking hastily round, Kenneth for the first time saw a door on the other side of the room, leading apparently into the room next it. The room was large and dark, for part of the window had been built up, so that Kenneth, having had no time to examine closely, had failed to remark this door sooner.

As he said afterwards, this was the most fearful moment of the day. It was like a horrible nightmare, to realise the impossibility of guarding both doors, and the equal impossibility of knowing from which quarter the danger was to come. The suspense did not last long. While he listened anxiously for the sound of the madman's step, that he might know from which side to expect him, the handle of the other door was stirred. The door opened. The madman's grinning face looked in. And oh, horror! in his hand he held a gun, which he presented to the child's head as she sat upon the floor.

Without one fear for himself—without one thought of the comparative value of her life and his, the brave boy sprang forward to seize the muzzle of the gun. He was in time. He succeeded in turning it a little upwards, and in laying his hand on the trigger. After a glance to make sure the direction of the barrel was safe, he pulled

the trigger. With inexpressible thankfulness he heard the doghead fall, but no explosion followed. To the poor idiot a gun, loaded or unloaded, was the same thing.

At the same moment, the long-wished for sounds of men's voices were heard. Kenneth called to the child to run down-stairs and tell where they were. Bewildered and frightened, she obeyed him, although her trembling limbs carried her but slowly. And even in the midst of his fearful struggle with the madman, Kenneth could feel the comfort of knowing that she, at least, was safe. A fearful struggle it was truly—a struggle for life and death, as each grasped the gun and strove to wrest it from the other. Kenneth felt his strength fast failing, and still the sound of voices and steps was but distant. Again, in the same sudden way as before, the madman quitted his hold, and, with a loud cry of "the knife!" sprang back into the other room.

Instantly Kenneth turned, and ran to the stairs at his utmost speed. He had now none to care for but himself, and flight was his only safety. The band of men, summoned by his companions, had come to the foot of the staircase. He reached them. They opened their ranks to let him pass, and closed again to oppose the madman, who was close upon his heels. Even to so many, Sandy was a fearful object, as he came down-stairs at full speed, brandishing the large knife in his hand. One of the men carried a short stick. He threw it at

Sandy's head. Sandy involuntarily raised his hand to defend his head. He lost his balance, stumbled, and fell heavily to the ground. His head struck violently against one of the steps. He was stunned, and the terrible knife, rolling from his grasp, it was easy and safe enough to rush in upon him, and bind him hand and foot, before he recovered from the blow.

Kenneth meanwhile had staggered into the room from whence he had carried the child, and had sunk, breathless and exhausted, on a seat. Now, for the first time, he was able fully to realise the horrors of the scenes through which he had passed. An overwhelming feeling of sickness and giddiness came over him. There was a mist before his eyes, a singing in his ears, and for a few minutes he had only a confused idea of what was passing around him.

When he came fully to himself he found the room full of his own companions, who all looked anxiously at him. Douglas sat supporting him, and a woman, with tears streaming down her cheeks, was holding a cup of water to his lips. The little Lizzie sat on the ground at his feet; one arm clasped his knees, while with the other she drew her mother's dress close round her little face, as if to shut out every painful sight or sound.

"Oh ! the Lord be thanked, he is coming round," the woman cried, fervently, as Kenneth opened his eyes. "Oh, sir, has the blackguard hurt you ?"

"Not in the least," he answered, trying to smile. "I

can't think what made me such a fool as to get sick when all was over ;" and again, as the thought of that "all" recurred to his mind, the sickness and giddiness returned, and he again closed his eyes.

At this moment two or three men came in. One looked superior to the rest. He was, in fact, the farmer upon whose farm the others were labourers.

"Well," he said, as he came in, "the puir fallow is safe enough now. But where is the brave young gentleman? Eh, sir," as his eye fell upon Kenneth's pale face, "have you been hurt? I hope the vagabond did you no ill?"

"None in the world," Kenneth again asserted, "only I am a regular ninny; and there is such a queer shaky feeling comes over me whenever I think of it;" and a violent shudder showed the strength of the nervous shivering of which he spoke.

"And no wonder, indeed," the farmer said. "It was enough to make any one feel shaky. You, in the big empty house alone, with that raging madman. But, Jenny woman, have you nothing to give the young gentleman? A mouthful of wine or spirits would be the best thing to put him in heart."

"And I have not a thing. O Mr Scott, sir, what shall I do?" the poor woman cried, wringing her hands, as she saw Kenneth's head fall again upon his friend's shoulder.

"Tut, woman, don't make a noise about it. He'll

do bravely. I say, you, Jim, run down to the farm and ask the goodwife for a bottle of my best wine, and anything else she knows would do the lad good."

But Kenneth eagerly interposed. The only thing he required, he said, was to get out into the open air. It was the sight of all these things, and he glanced almost timidly round the room, which made him uncomfortable, because they brought back what had happened; and the sensible Mr Scott felt at once that he was right, and advised that he should be suffered to take his own way.

"You'll go to my house and get a glass of wine," he said; "and here, sir, lean on me. I am stronger than your friend there, though not more willing, I am sure," with a kindly glance at Douglas's anxious face.

Kenneth gladly took the sturdy arm held out to him, and rose to leave the room; but Lizzie clung to his knees, sobbing and crying with a kind of hysterical violence; and he could not go without trying to soothe her. He was fond of children; and so accustomed to fondle and play with his own little brothers and sisters, that he knew well how to deal with her. He raised her in his arms; and, laying her head on his shoulders, he stroked back the long fair hair, wet with tears, patted her cheek, and spoke to her gently, soothingly, asking her, for her mother's sake, and for his sake, to give over crying; and, gradually, the sobs became more gentle, and she even began to look up at him, and to try to smile in answer to his kind pleasant words. When he

saw her so far quieted, he carried her to the bed, laid her down, and, covering her with the counterpane, and drawing down the curtains, to shut out the sight of all the things he himself found it so painful to look upon he bade her go to sleep, and promised that her mother should stay beside her and keep everything quiet.

The mother had followed his every motion with admiring eyes.

“To see him, that stood up as brave as a lion to save her,” she said to Mr Scott, “now nursing her just as gentle as a dove. There’s me, the lassie’s ain mither, I couldna hae dawted her mair tenderly. Eh, sir,” as Kenneth turned to shake hands with her, and bid her good-bye, “I do hope the Lord will keep you from bein the waur of this day’s wark; for sure am I there would be mony a sair heart and wet e’e, amang them that aught ye, did ony ill befall even the hair of your head. The Lord’s blessing be with you and yours, sir, in a’ your goings out and comings in; and a full reward may He give ye, for that ye hae keepit our hearts and our home from being desolate this day.”

In attending to his little friend, Kenneth had forgotten his own feelings, and had regained much of his usual calm composed manner; but, as they passed the spot where Sandy lay, a strong shudder again shook his whole frame. The poor madman was safe enough now, bound hand and foot, and with a strong man sitting on each side of him, to resist any effort he might make to free

himself. He evidently recognised Kenneth, for he struggled hard to rise when he saw him, and ground his teeth, and grinned with rage, when the men forced him to lie still. The considerate Mr Scott observed how much Kenneth was affected at the sight, and he would not pause to answer the questions poured forth upon him from all the men, as to what was to be done with the idiot, but shouted out his orders as he went down-stairs.

It was not, in truth, an easy case to settle. No one knew if Sandy had any relations who could take the responsibility of acting for him. For years he had been a homeless wanderer through that part of the country; but no one knew from whence he had come, or what had been his previous history. One of the men, with the foolish daring too common in his class, proposed to set him at liberty without taking further trouble about him. He had never done ill before, he said, and, after such a lesson, he was not likely to do any again. But to this proposal Mr Scott would, of course, not consent. He desired the men to watch him strictly a little longer, and promised to see the minister or doctor, and get their advice as to how to dispose of him until the proper authorities could be applied to.

When they got out into the open air, Kenneth's companions were eager to hear a full history of all that had passed; but Kenneth's nerves could not yet stand the least allusion to the subject, and Mr Scott, with kindly peremptoriness, forbade them to say a word about it.

With the same sensible consideration, when they reached his own house, he took Kenneth into the parlour, and then went to tell his wife the true state of the case, so that she might not tease him with questions; and the good motherly woman entered fully into his views, and only came to Kenneth to attend with kindness and skill to his present condition, and to insist on his drinking as much as she saw fit of the farmer's good port wine.

Kenneth was somewhat inclined to resist this prescription, as he was not accustomed to take wine, and did not like it. But he had reason to be glad that he had yielded to Mrs Scott's solicitations; for the glass of it, which she forced him to swallow, revived and strengthened him more than he could have believed possible; and he soon declared himself able to proceed homewards.

Mr Scott offered to drive him home in his gig; but Kenneth resolutely declined the offer. He knew, he said, that Mr Scott had no time to spare from the arrangements he had to make for Sandy's safe custody; besides, he greatly preferred walking. And the farmer and his wife, seeing that his heart was set upon it, allowed him to have his own way. Before he went, Mr Scott asked for his address, that he might call the first day he was in Edinburgh, and hear how he had got on with the long walk, and he detained Douglas a moment after the rest, to caution him not to allow his com-

panions to tease Kenneth by discussions about what had passed.

Kenneth had believed himself quite restored by his glass of wine, and the quarter of an hour's quiet rest in the farmer's parlour; but it was not so. The long continued strain upon his nerves had affected his bodily strength more than he was at all aware of. He felt languid and exhausted; and before he had gone half-a-mile he found himself wishing earnestly that he were safely at home.

His companions observed that he looked pale and wearied, and that he walked languidly; and they were therefore the more ready to observe Mr Scott's directions, and to refrain from questions and allusions about the terrible scene which had so affected him. It was well for Kenneth that it was so. Had his friends been at liberty to express all they thought of his conduct, it is hardly possible but that self-elation must have taken the place of that simple fervent gratitude to God which now filled his whole heart.

On reaching home, Kenneth mentioned the matter to none. It was not his nature to be ready to tell a tale of which he was the hero. Had Hugh been at home, it would have been a great relief to tell all to him, and to make him a sharer in his almost painfully intense feelings of thankfulness for having been made the means of saving a fellow-creature's life. But Hugh, George, and Edward were spending the day with their cousin Hugh

Grahame. Percy, Kenneth did not see, except in his aunt's presence, and before her he had no inclination to open his mind.

Kenneth had been engaged to join the juvenile party in Charlotte Square at dinner. But, during his absence, Mrs Grahame had made a new engagement for him. She, Mr Grahame, Percy, and Elizabeth, had been engaged to dine with Mr Hugh Grahame and Mrs Lindsey. It was what the boys called a "grown-up party," to which none of them had been invited. But, in the forenoon, Mrs Lindsey called to say that one of their expected guests was a Mr Percy, who had been lately in India, had known Colonel and Mrs M'Leod very intimately, and was anxious to see their boys. He was to leave Edinburgh on Monday, and did not know whether or not he should return to it, and therefore their Uncle Hugh wished that one or both the boys should accompany their uncle and aunt to the dinner party. Mrs Grahame accepted the invitation for Kenneth, but, with a consideration for which Hugh would not have given her credit, she asked that he might be allowed to keep his dinner engagement with his cousins, and only come to his Uncle Hugh's in the evening.

Kenneth, by the time he reached home, felt so utterly worn out, and his head ached so much, that not even the hope of hearing about his father and mother could reconcile him to the prospect of a dinner party. As was

his way, however, he complied with his aunt's wishes, without murmur or remonstrance.

During the first part of the evening this ready compliance met with no due reward. The dinner part of the business was to poor Kenneth sufficiently dull. He was too simple and unconscious to be oppressed by bashfulness, which too often afflicts schoolboys of his age. And, with natural and becoming modesty, taking for granted that his thoughts and opinions could not be worth much, he would gladly have remained silent, and amused himself by listening to what was said by others, more particularly by Mr Percy, who was a lively intelligent man, one who had travelled much, who had the habit of seeing every thing worth seeing, and the art of telling well what he had seen. Silence was not to be permitted to Kenneth. He was seated next an elderly lady, who prided herself upon being able to adapt her conversation to any class or any age; and, in the display of this talent, she overwhelmed him with silly questions, and remarks about everything which she supposed it possible a schoolboy could care for. Kenneth listened to her, and answered her with all his own ready politeness. But the dinner seemed to him an intolerably tedious affair, and it was with a ludicrous sense of relief that he saw the ladies rise to leave the table.

Now the pleasures of the evening began, at least as far as he was concerned. So soon as the ladies were gone, his Uncle George called to him to take a vacant

seat, between himself and Mr Percy, and the latter, with real kindness, at once gave himself to entertaining the boy in the way most agreeable to him, by giving him every particular he could wish for about his parents, their way of life, their house, and the estimation in which they were held by all who knew them. On the last point Mr Percy was eloquent. He was well fitted to appreciate the fine qualities possessed by both Colonel M'Leod and his wife, and this more general esteem and respect had been quickened into a warmer feeling by great kindness shown to himself during a long and painful illness.

Kenneth's enjoyment was great. His fatigue and headache were forgotten. His only regret was, that Hugh was not there to share his pleasure. Every time the door bell rang, or the dining-room door opened, he looked round, hoping that it might be Hugh. And he felt half angry that he should delay his coming so long, when he knew that he was to meet a friend of his father's. At last, after a ring of the door bell, Kenneth distinctly heard Hugh's voice. A fear now arose that he might be taken straight up to the drawing-room. And once among these talkers, Kenneth thought, with a bitter recollection of his own experience, "there is no hope for him." He could not attend to one of Mr Percy's most interesting stories, so earnestly was he watching to catch the attention of either of his uncles, that he might ask their permission to go out and bring

Hugh into the dining-room. At the same time, he was trying to make out what was passing in the lobby. He could hear Hugh's voice talking eagerly, and another voice also, a strange voice, the voice, as it seemed, of a rough country man.

Before the attention of any one but Kenneth had been excited to this bustle in the lobby, the dining-room door opened, and Hugh came in, looking flushed, eager, and a little bewildered.

"Uncle Hugh, Uncle George," he said, looking excitedly from the one to the other, "there is a man here. He says he wants to see our Kenneth. He says Kenneth saved his little girl's life. O Ken, Ken ;" breaking off abruptly, and springing to his brother's side, passing his arm round his neck, and twisting himself round so as to look up into his face, "What is it all? What did you do? O Ken, were you in danger?"

Kenneth coloured high, but did not speak, although several of the gentlemen repeated Hugh's questions. It would, indeed, have been painful, pretty nearly impossible to him, to be the narrator of his own exploits before so many strangers. His Uncle George entered readily into his feelings.

"Better get the man in to tell the story," he said, looking to his brother. "We can hardly expect this modest young fellow," laying his hand kindly on Kenneth's shoulder, "to be his own trumpeter."

Mr Hugh Grahame assented, and the willing Hugh

darted out of the room, and presently returned, leading in a respectable-looking man, dressed like a farm-servant. The good man was at first too much occupied in making a bow to each one present, in stroking down his hair, and in uneasy speculations as to the mysterious injury his mud-bespattered trousers and shoes were likely to do to the fine carpet, to be able to attend to Hugh's repeated "That is my brother Kenneth." But when Hugh had, by an impatient pull at his sleeve, succeeded in making him hear, then all else was instantly forgotten, and he went eagerly forward to meet Kenneth, who had risen, and was holding out his hand to him, saying simply—

"Are you little Lizzie's father?"

"Ay, sir, her glad and thankful father," he said, grasping Kenneth's hand in both his own, his voice trembling and his eyes glistening with emotion, "who might have been broken-hearted this nicht but for you. Oh, sir, the Lord be about your bed, and around your path, from this day and for ever, for that ye hae saved our wee pet lamb frae siccan a fearfu' death this day."

The father's earnestness and depth of feeling touched and interested all present, as much as the becoming mixture of frankness and modesty in Kenneth's manner pleased them. Mr Grahame rose and brought forward a chair for his unexpected visitor. He pressed him to sit down and tell the whole story; and, in order to give him time to recover his composure, and to make him

feel more at ease among so many strangers, he poured out a glass of wine for him to drink Kenneth's health.

"Oh, but it's a long and happy life wad be his if our wishes could get it for him," the good man said, with simple fervour, taking the glass. "And there's here to you, sir, and to you, and to you," turning with due form to each one in turn. The length of the ceremony, as he considered it proper to perform it, gave full time, as Mr Grahame had wished, for his first emotions to subside, and, by the time he had received a cordial "Thank you" from each gentleman, he seemed to feel himself more at home among them, and more able to give the narrative required from him.

"It's but a lame kind of story I can give, sir," he said, in answer to Mr Grahame's request that he would begin at the beginning, and tell them all that had happened. "You see, sir, naebody can tell a' thing but the young gentleman himsel'; for he was a' alane, and there was nane to tell o' his brave deeds—blessins on him for a guid heart and a strong. And when it was a' dune, and they wanted to hear about it, he had gotten into a kind of trummle like, and turned sick, and a kind o' dwammie, whanever a word was said about it; and Mr Scott bade them a' haud their tongues and no plague him wi' questions."

"Well, any way, tell us what you do know. We know nothing at all," Mr Grahame said, glancing with a smile at Kenneth, who was blushing painfully from a

kind of shame at this mention of his weakness. "Where do you live, friend? Where did it all happen?"

"Aweel, sir, ye see," settling himself for a long story, "I work on Mr Scott's farm at Burnfoot, awa' there at the fut o' the hills. Ye'll maybe ken the place—a wild, cauld-lying bit it is. But Mr Scott is jist a raal nice man, and a braw farmer beside. They tell me the land was uncommon dour when he came to the farm, but he's gettin' it intil grand heart noo. Aweel, it's no lang sin we cam to the place; and the man that was afore me, he was a very respectable man, jist a raal guid-living man, and Mr Scott was jist by ordinar fond o' him. And he died, and his wife was jist a puir dwining kind o' a body. And Mr Scott, he was a kind o' sweer to pit her out o' her house. For he's a raal kind man is Mr Scott; and he says to her, says he—Jist you bide still for a bit, till you've had time to look about ye, and see what ye can do for yere bairns, and I'll get anither house, says he, for the new man. Sae he took us a' into his ain house till he should find anither for us. And he jist made us uncommon comfortable, and baith he and Mrs Scott were jist raal kind. Howsomever, my guid-wife—she's a raal clever kind of an active woman—and she didna jist like no to be in a hoose o' her ain. And our bits o' furniture were in the barn, and she couldna get them richt lookit after; and our twa bits o' lasses were jist made ower muckle o' up at the farm—a' body thought sae muckle o' them—particklar o' wee Lizzie,

for, though I say it that shouldna say it, she's jist a by-ordinar bonny lassie, an' a bit speerity thing that a' body likes, blessins on her bonny face. Sae the guidwife, jist a kind o' wearied to get to ousels again, and as noither hoose was like to cast up, she says, says she, What shuld ail us to live in a room or twa o' the big hoose, if Mr Scott wad mak them snug and richt for us?"

"And what was the big house?" Mr Percy asked, who was much amused by the man's round-about way of telling his story. One of the gentlemen who sat near him had interpreted the Scotch words he did not understand.

"Oh, sir, ye see it had aince been a raal grand place, an' it's a braw hoose an' a bonnie, wi' rooms upón rooms in it. But the gentleman that lived in it long ago, he got a' wrong about his money matters, I'm thinking. And when he gaed awa, there was a great quarrellin' amang lawyers an' folk, an' naebody could settle wha was to tak care of the place. And, as they say, 'what's a' body's business is naebody's business,' so ane and anither left it alane, and so the place jist went to wrack an' ruin. However, Mr Scott was vera kind, and he let the guidwife chuse two rooms, and he made them raal snod and comfortable. And we went into them, and were jist as happy as we could be. They were up twa pair o' stairs, but the guidwife thocht it wad tak less to mak them a' richt than ony o' the rooms doon-stairs. And Mr Scott was sae kind, we didna

want to pit him to muckle expense, an' sae we were jist content wi' them. And the bairnies had the auld garden to play in, an' were as happy as twa queens.

"Aweel, sir, ye see this vera day I was awa at the back pairt o' the farm at wark; and the guidwife she gaed out to see a neebour that was far frae weel. An' she left our twa lassies and a neebour's bairn playin' about on the floor. An' she bade them be gude bairns, and no gang near the fire, an' no be rinnin up an' doonstairs, an' she wad sune be back. Aweel, they were playin' there as gude an' happy as could be, when up comes daft Sandy among them. Noo, ye see, daft Sandy had taen a great likin' to our wee Lizzie when we first cam here, an' he was aye takin' her in his arms, an' kissing her. An' our Lizzie, she's a raal spunkie bit bairn, an' she couldna bide him, an' she aye cried that he was an ugly man, and that his face was a' dirty, an' that she wadna kiss him. An' she got into a kind o' way o' fleeing awa' frae him whenever he cam near her, an' crying out she didna like daft Sandy."

"But who is daft Sandy," one of the gentlemen asked.

"Ou, sir, he's jist a nateral that's gane daundering about the kintra side for mony a year, they tell me. Naebody kens wha's aucht him, puir fallow; but he jist gets a bite and a sup here, and a bed there, and fends for himsel jist ony way he can. He has jist an unco wark wi' our hoose, 'his ain muckle hoose,' he ca's it. And he jist daundered out an' in, and up-stairs an' doon-

stairs, and we never fashed oursels about him. A'boddy says he is raal harmless. No but what he is a terrible passionate man whiles. But ye see, folk are weel used to him, and jist never heed his tantrums. Aweel, whether it was that the puir dementit body had been angered wi' wee Lizzie for no speaking to him, or whether he had jist taen an ill-will at her, naeboddy kens, but the neebours say, that for this gey while past he has aye been saying that he couldna bide her, and that he was gaun to cut the head frae her shouthers, an' droon her i' the well, an' I dinna ken what mair."

"And did nobody warn you to take care of the child," Mr Percy asked.

"Ou, sir, ye see naeboddy ever heeds what Sandy says, and they jist thocht it was one o' his daft tantrums. Ony way we never heard a word about it. And there was anither thing. The guidwife, twa-three days back, lost a curious auld knife she had. It was jist a raal cur'osity that knife. It was an auld-warld thing. Naebody kent its history. It had belonged to the guidwife's faither, and he had gotten it frae his faither, an' he frae his, an' so on, naeboddy kens for hoo long. An' the gudewife was a ae bairn, an' sae it cam to her, an' she aye took raal gude care of it. It was a fearsome kind o' a knife, wi' a muckle blade wi' a sharp pint, mair like a sword than a knife; an' we aye keepit it on a high shelf oot o' the bairns' way. Aweel, the knife was awa frae the shelf, and naeboddy kenned aucht about it. And tho

gudewife was jist raal vexed. But I said to her, says I, 'Ou, woman, it'll cast up some day, it canna be lost.' An' sae it did cast up wi' a vengeance. For when Sandy cam in, if he hadna this very knife in his hand. An' the gudewife says that the vera day she lost sicht o' it, she cam in frae the garden, whaur she had been hingin' out some claiths to dry, and saw Sandy rinnin out o' our room intill anither, as if he were hiding.

"Aweel, sir, sae sune as Lizzie seed him, she up and tried to flee away, as she aye did, cryin' she didna like daft Sandy. But he catched her, and up wi' her in his arms, and swore he'd cut the head frae her shouthers. An' he said, the Lord forgie him; he said the Lord had bidden him cut off her head, an' burn her i' the fire. Ye see, sir, he's just raal regular at kirk, sae he has a kind o' glimmerin o' wha the Lord is. Aweel, he grippit the wean under his oxter, this way, and the knife in that hand, an' wi' the ither he up wi' the poker, and pit it in the fire, an' said he'd burn the flesh aff her banes. Eh, sir, it makes me a' in a trummle to think o't," and he wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead.

Kenneth had laid his head on the table; for although he had believed his nervousness was all gone, this minute description was more than he could bear. The man went on—

"Weel, sir, ye see, whan he lootit doun to get the poker, he coudna haud the bairn sae weel, an' she warslet herse?' oot o' his grip, an' the three weans ran

thegither to the stairs, screechin for their daddy and their mammy, that were far enough awa, puir bairns ! But Sandy he ran after them, and grippit Lizzie again, and back to the room wi' her. And the ithers ran out, an' fand this young gentleman, an' some o' his freends at the yett. And puir Maggie, she cried that Lizzie was alane wi' daft Sandy, and that he was gaun to cut off her head. And this brave young gentleman, he cried to the rest to run for help, and he up to the hoose to save the bairn. He lookit that some shuld gae wi' him, but they were a' feared, and nae wonder, it's an' awsome thing to face a raging madman, and him wi' a muckle knife in his hand. Howsomever he wasna feared, and when nane wad gang wi' him, he went in by himsel'. And noo, sir, that's maist a' I ken, for the puir wean says, that when Sandy carried her back to the room, an' flang her on the flure, a' sicht an' sound gaed frae her."

"Poor child, she must have fainted," one of the gentlemen said.

"Like eneuch, sir; but her heed had gotten a sair dinnle on the ground, I'm thinking, for there's an awfu' black mark upon her broo. Ony way, she kent naething till she fand hersel' in that gentleman's arms, an' he was carrying her up the stairs. And he tauld her no to be feared, for that he wad take care o' her. And they gaed up to a room at the tap o' the hoose, and he set her doon, an' closed the door, and set his shouthers tae it, an' bad her be still, and Sandy wadna find them. But,

puir wean ! when Sandy shook the door she screeched, and he kent they war there. And then he strove outside the door, and the gentleman strove in, and Sandy was like to get the better, when a' in a moment he stoppit striving, an' gaed awa, an' the gentleman whispered Lizzie that maybe he had heard folk comin' and was feared. But waes me ! that wasna the way o't. But ye see, he kens the haill hoose, an' he had minded that there was anither door to the room, and he was cunning enough to gae round to it. And as he gaed, he fand an auld gun that I had gotten frae Mr Scott to shoot birds wi', and I had putten it up there to keep it oot o' the bairns' way. And the first that they kent was seeing the door open, and the gun presented fair to the bairn's head. It wasna loaded, the Lord be praised. But Sandy didna ken that, and the young gentleman didna ken that, an' sae it was a' the same brave in him to spang in as he did atween the wean and the gun. And he cried to Lizzie to run, and bring up the folk that were coming in, and he grippit the gun, an' he and Sandy focht for it. And Lizzie she cam' fleecin' doun the stair, and met the neebours that the ither young gentlemen had gathered thegither, and wi' them the puir bairn's ain mither, nigh hand beside hersel' wi' fear for her bit wean. And Lizzie she cried to run to the young gentleman, or Sandy wad kill him. An' jist as they got to the fut o' the stair, there was a spang through the room above, and doon he cam fleecin',

an' Sandy after him, wi' the awsome knife in his hand. Sae they loot him pass, and then closed on Sandy, and got him doon some way, the guidwife didna ken hoo, for she was owre taen up wi' the bairn she had gotten back frae the gates o' death, and wi' the young gentleman, who was sae sair forfoughen, she thought he wad ne'er come to. And that's a' I ken."

All turned eagerly to hear Kenneth's account of the rest. He gave it in as few words as possible. When he spoke of the door, the man interrupted him.

"Ou ay, mony a lauch Mr Scott has had about that door. Ye see it was on the braid o' its back whan we cam to the hoose, an' the wricht that mended it, he was in a sair hurry, an' pit it on the wrong way. He ne'er thocht o' the ill that trick was to do."

"Well," said one of the gentlemen, as Kenneth finished his story, "you are a cool hand. To be able, in such fearful peril, to collect your senses so as to form such a clever plan for beguiling the madman. I should say few could do it."

"Oh, as to that," Kenneth said, modestly, "there was no cleverness in me. I only happened to remember a story papa once told us about a madman and his physician."

"And pray what was the story?" some one asked.

"The madman was sometimes all right, and had been quite sensible for some time. 'The physician and he were walking on the battlemented roof of a house, and

the madman talked quite sensibly until, suddenly, when they came to a part where the wall was low, he seized the physician in his arms and cried, 'Come, my dear sir, let us immortalise our names. Let us leap from hence to the ground.'

"He was much stronger than the physician, and the wall was so low that he could easily have forced the other over it. But the physician showed not the least fear, but only said, quite calmly, 'Oh, my dear sir, that is nothing; any one could do that. Let us rather go down and leap up; that would be the difficulty.' And the madman was quite satisfied, and they went into the house, where the physician could get help to secure him."

"I have heard that story before," the gentleman said, who had spoken first. "But you must at least allow us to give you credit for presence of mind, in being able, under such circumstances, to recall it for your own use."

"Why," said Kenneth, "I did not do anything to recall it. There was no time. It flashed into my mind, I did not know how. I think," in a low, reverential tone, "I think that God brought it into my mind."

There was so much real feeling in his manner as he said this, that all present were touched, and there was a moment's silence. Then another gentleman remarked,

"I think, at all events, you must allow us to give you credit for extraordinary courage in resolving to go in alone to face the madman."

"I don't see much that courage had to do with it," Kenneth said, with great simplicity. "I really could not help going. You see I heard the child had none to help her, and how could I help going to her?"

His Uncle George fully appreciated the simplicity of character which had dictated this answer, and anxious to preserve it in its purity, he hastened to avert all further comment, by asking Lizzie's father how he had found Kenneth.

"Why, sir," he answered, "ye see it was gey an' late afore I heard tell o' the business ava. For ye see I was at the back pairt o' the farm, an' the folk they were a' busy, seein to get Sandy safe awa, an' sae naebody cam near me, till nigh hand time to loose work, ony way, a man cam an' tell't me the haill story. Sae, as ye may believe, I gaed hame fast eneuch, for my heart seemed sair till I could get my bit wean in my twa arms ance again. Sae the gude wife, she tell't me a' the outs an' ins, as I hae tell't you. And I says to her, says I, but whaur can I see the brave young gentleman that saved her. And deed, she says, that's jist what I canna tell ye, for, says she, I was in sic a witherum aboot him, an' aboot the bairn, that, says she, I let him awa, and never speered whaur I could hear o' him. But, says she, I think Mr Scott could tell ye. Sae, says I, I maun awa to the farm and speer. For, says I, hoo culd I gang to the Lord's hoose the morn to thank Him for His gude-ness, and me no hae thankit the messenger He sent to

our help. And I must seek the young gentleman, although he was twal miles off, says I. Sae I jist stoppit to drink a cup of tea, an' to see my wee pet lammiie sleepin' safe an' sound in her ain quiet bed, and then I steppit doun to the farm. And Mr Scott, he was awa seeing to Sandy's safe keeping till they could get the shirra tell't about him; but Mrs Scott, she tell't me whaur the young gentleman lived, sae I jist took my stick in my hand, an' cam' awa in. And the servant at yere hoose, sir, he was just uncommon ceevil, and when he seed I was pit aboot at no seein' ye, he speered, was it onything o' great importance I had to say. Sae I up and tell't him the story, an' he was jist bye ordinar kind. And said, says he, ye had better gang to his uncle's hoose, an see him there, for it wad be a pity, says he, no to see him, an' you come sae far, ance errand. And he cam wi' me to show me the way. And noo, gentlemen," rising, and bowing all round, "I'm thinkin' I'll hae to be steppin' my ways home again. And," to Kenneth, giving his hand a final squeeze, "it's no words that can tell what we feel to you, sir; but it's the Lord himsel' that maun reward ye."

All the gentlemen came forward to shake hands with the worthy man; and the well-pleased Hugh, at a whisper from his uncle, filled his pockets with cakes and fruit from the dessert, for his children.

"And Kenneth and I'll come out and see your Lizzie," he said, eagerly.

“Eh, sir, if ye wad. It wad be a proud and happy day to us,” he answered, and Kenneth’s ready assent seemed to give him the most heartfelt pleasure. He went away, under Hugh’s guidance, to get some more substantial supper than the cakes and the fruit, before setting out on his long walk. And he had the pleasure of repeating his tale in the servants’ hall, and of again sounding Kenneth’s praises.

When Hugh returned to the dining-room, he found that the day’s adventure was still the subject of conversation.

“Ah,” Hugh cried, exultingly, “that is the boy they called a coward.”

“Hold your tongue, Hugh,” Kenneth said, with angry peremptoriness.

“There is an elder brother’s tone for you,” said their Uncle Hugh, laughing. “Never you mind him,” to Hugh, who was a great favourite, “come here, and I’ll protect you, and you tell us who called him a coward, and why.”

And nothing loath, Hugh, with only a deprecatory glance at Kenneth, stood by his uncle’s side, and gave the whole story, with much spirit.

“Well, Kenneth, you are a fine fellow, and here is my hand on it,” said his uncle, stretching across the table to shake hands with him. “You are your own father’s son in everything. He never was one to be laughed or teased out of the right. And let me tell

you, my boy, the moral courage to do right in the face of reproach and shame, is more rare and more valuable than the physical courage you have shown to-day."

"Yes," said his Uncle George, "a man may, perhaps, once in his life be called to face danger, as you did to-day, but the other kind of courage he must want continually, as he goes through the world."

"A man may not be often called to go into such danger as Kenneth did," remarked Mr Percy; "but if a man is to be worth much, if he is to feel sure that he can, under all circumstances, do his duty, he must acquire at least so much of physical courage as to be able to keep possession of his senses, even in the presence of great danger."

"But, uncle," Hugh cried, at the first pause, "there was one thing that man said, which I am sure was not true. He said that Kenneth hoped some of the other boys would go with him. I am sure," with a proud toss of his head, "that our Kenneth did not care a bit whether any went with him or not."

"I am sure our Kenneth is not such a fool," his uncle said, drily. "Eh, Ken?"

"No, indeed, uncle; I should have been very glad to have had half a dozen helpers."

Hugh looked disappointed.

"Why, you little fool," his uncle said, smiling, "don't you see that the courage of going to face the danger

was all the greater, the more he felt the greatness and reality of that danger."

"Ay, Hugh," Kenneth remarked, "remember your own wise sayings on the subject of fool-hardiness, not so long ago." And Hugh was satisfied.

The gentlemen now rose to join the ladies. Kenneth sought to attract his cousin Percy's attention. He caught hold of him as they were leaving the dining-room.

"O Percy," he said, imploringly, and then stopped.

"Well, Ken, what is it?"

"Only do you think it *must* all be told up-stairs? I do so hate to have a fuss made about me; and ladies, at least some ladies, do make such a fuss."

"Well, I don't know, Kenneth, we must ask the elders," and he turned back to state the case to his father and uncle, who, with Mr Percy and Hugh, were behind.

"I don't see how we can help you, Kenneth, my boy," said his Uncle Hugh. "It might not seem respectful to your aunts to keep them for so long a time in ignorance of what others know. And besides," glancing up-stairs, "two or three of the gentlemen are already in the drawing-room, and have probably begun the tale."

Kenneth gave a little sigh of resignation. His Uncle George looked kindly on him.

"There is another way of helping you, Kenneth," he said. "Suppose you were to go home. After all you

have gone through to-day, I should think home the best place for you."

Kenneth eagerly caught the proposal, for in truth his head ached, and he was very tired.

"Oh, I should like it so much," he said, "only, ——" and he looked at Mr Percy, colouring at the same time, as if he feared there might be presumption in expecting that gentleman should give him more of his attention if he were to stay.

Mr Percy readily understood the "only," and the look.

"Don't take me into account," he said. "You and I have had a fine chat already. The chances are we might have no more if you stayed. I have to make acquaintance with this young fellow," laying his hand on Hugh's shoulder, "and I shall hope to see you again. This afternoon's post brought me letters, from which I see that I must return to Edinburgh in a few weeks."

This difficulty removed, Kenneth gladly went home, while Hugh went up to the drawing-room to enjoy, to his heart's content, hearing Kenneth's praises sounded from every tongue. He went about from one person to another, listening to their encomiums, answering every question they chose to ask, eager to tell the whole story as often as any would listen, and all the time quite unconscious that his own open, sunny face, the simple frankness of his manners, and his unaffected delight in his brother's glory, made him almost as much an

object of interest to the ladies as the real hero of the night.

On the following Saturday, Kenneth and the two Hughs went out to see little Lizzie—Kenneth's Lizzie, as Hugh called her. At Hugh's request, Kenneth took them by the road he and his companions had gone, instead of by the more direct one by which they had returned. Hugh wished to go over precisely the whole scene of the day's adventures.

When they came in sight of the house, they saw a small figure sitting at the door steps, intently watching the road. Her attention was directed down the road, but when she heard the sound of their voices, she turned quickly, and with a glad cry ran down the steps to meet them. It was Lizzie. A sudden fit of bashfulness seized her just as she came up to them, and, instead of running into the arms Kenneth held out to her, she stopped short, and hung down her head.

Hugh was not at all disappointed in this first sight of the heroine of Kenneth's adventure. As her father had said, she was "a raal bonnie bairn," and very bonny she looked as she stood before them, her bare foot working nervously in the dust of the road, the bright, fair face, beaming with joy amidst all its shyness, and the blue eyes glancing up every now and then with an expression half timid, half arch.

As we know, Kenneth had the art of making children feel at home with him, and soon Lizzie had put her little

hand in his to lead him to her mother. On reaching the house, the sense that she was doing the honour of her home seemed to restore her confidence, and there was little shyness in her exulting.

“Here he is, mammy; I said he’d come the day.”

The mother was putting the “muckle pot” on the fire, and in her eager haste to welcome Kenneth, she nearly overturned it. Thanks, questions, and apologies, were poured forth in such an overwhelming torrent, as made poor Kenneth half inclined to wish he had not come. The best the house afforded was of course brought forth for the luncheon, and the hungry boys thought it a luncheon to be by no means despised, composed as it was of crisp oat cakes, butter, cheese, and such sweet milk, as recalled Birkenholme dairy to their minds. Certainly Hugh had no reason to be disappointed as to the estimation in which Kenneth was held, either here or at the farm, where they paid a visit on their way home.





CHAPTER XV.

FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES.

DURING all these spring months Charlie Home was regaining strength and spirits at Birkenholme. Many a quibble, by the way, and many a pun was perpetrated upon the conjunction of these two names. But that was a matter of course where schoolboys were concerned, schoolboys being essentially punning animals. Charlie was now in better health and spirits than he had ever enjoyed in his life before, but still he remained at Birkenholme. Two or three times had the day of his return home been fixed. But each time grandmamma had written one of her own old-fashioned courteous letters to his uncle, to ask for a prolongation of the visit, and Mr Home had each time, with only too much readiness, granted the request. Charlie had endeared himself to every member of the family; and Mrs Grahame so thoroughly entered into the painfulness of his circumstances, to a boy of his sensitive temperament, that she could not make up her

mind to let him leave her. So at last it was finally settled that he should remain through the summer, and only return with her own grandsons in October. Mr Manson, the clergyman of the parish, who had been accustomed to give Kenneth and Hugh daily lessons, undertook to keep Charlie up with his class-fellows. And the gentle, docile boy was not one who required emulation or companionship to make him diligent.

Hugh was enchanted at the prospect of having his two best friends, Charlie and Hugo, with him during the holidays; and with that prospect before him, he bore more philosophically than might have been expected, the pleasant but tantalising memories called up by Charlie's weekly descriptions of all the sweet home pleasures for which poor Hugh did so earnestly long.

"It isn't that I don't like the Academy," he said to Kenneth one day when the brothers had happened to return from school alone, and had been confiding to each other their longings after their home. "I like the Academy famously for school-time. For school-time it is a thousand times better than Mr Manson's horrid tiresome study. If only I could have Birkenholme for other times. To have the Academy for lessons and Birkenholme for everything else, that is what I should like."

"A strikingly modest wish," Kenneth remarked.

"Well, but should not you like it too?"

"Oh, I daresay I should. Only as it is by no means possible to lift up either Birkenholme or the Academy, and carry one or the other seventy miles through the air, I don't see much use in wishing."

"I can't fancy," Hugh pursued, without heeding Kenneth's answer, "being able to feel the least bit in the world sorry for anything, when once the day comes for going to Birkenholme, that day of days. But there are certainly some things, and, above all, some people I should like to take with me. Old Hugo goes with us, that is one comfort. But there is Edward. I once thought I could never like him. But he and I get on famously, and I do believe even on that day I shall be sorry to leave him."

"And Percy?" Kenneth suggested.

"Oh yes, and Percy," Hugh assented eagerly. "He is a famous good fellow. Do you know, Ken, of all the men I know, next to papa and yourself, I like Percy."

Kenneth smiled at the odd conjunction of himself, his father, and Percy, but Hugh did not remark the smile; he went on—

"And there is Elizabeth, too; I shall be sorry to leave her. She is very kind to me. And one thinks all the more of kindness from her, because she is so quiet. Did I tell you what she said the other day? She said she was glad we had come to live with them, because before we came she had never known that old grown-up girls like her had a duty to do for their little

brothers. But now she had learned it, and learned to feel happy in doing it. And she said she wished she could know our Lizzie and Kate, for that she thought they must be perfect sisters, they knew so well how to make their brothers happy. And indeed I wish she did know them. They could do her a great deal of good."

"Only you know they are so much younger."

"Oh, that does not signify. They know better how to be good sisters than she does. They could teach her that although they are younger."

"But she might not like to learn from girls so much younger than herself."

"Oh yes she would; Elizabeth is not that kind of girl. She looks stiff and set up because she is so shy. But you know she told me that you and I had taught her something. That shows she is not too proud to learn from younger people."

"She is proud, however," Kenneth said, musingly. "But I like her very much. And I think if she were to come to Birkenholme, grandmamma could help her to many right things."

"I should like to take the whole parcel of wee bodies with us too," Hugh said, returning to the former subject. "Above all, dear wee Janey, and Aunt Margaret's baby. And Aunt Margaret's own kind self. I should be sorry never to see her again. And still more, I shall be sorry to leave Uncle Edward and Uncle Hugh, and good

good Uncle John and Aunt Lucy and Aunt Grace," running himself out of breath, as names came to his mind more and more rapidly.

"And Uncle George. How could you forget him?"

"Ah, how could I? I think now I know him well; I could almost put him before Uncle John—almost put him next Percy. How he takes care for everything that can give us pleasure or do us good. Ah yes, even on that day, I shall be quite sorry to leave Uncle George."

"And Aunt Jane," Kenneth insinuated slyly.

"I should just think so," was the quick rejoinder.

"You ought," Kenneth persisted, "she has done you a deal of good."

"Oh, horrid, nasty medicine does one good. But no one is expected to be sorry to do without it, nevertheless."

"But one is expected to be grateful for the good it has done," Kenneth said, laughing. "And I am sure you ought to feel grateful to Aunt Jane."

Hugh made a wry face.

"Show me first that she has done me good," he said, doubtfully.

"Oh I know she has, I am sure she has. Why, Hugh, you are quite a different fellow since you came here. You can set your face so much more cheerfully to do disagreeable things. You can obey Aunt Jane's most provoking orders with so much more readiness and

good-humour. You could not do that before. And a man can never get on well ; I don't see," in a lower and more earnest tone, "how a child of God can get on at all, unless he has learned to obey readily and pleasantly, even when the person he is bound to obey is disagreeable and unreasonable, and when the thing he has to do is quite difficult and painful."

"Oh, that is all very well," Hugh said, a little impatiently. "But really I can't see how Aunt Jane has taught me to obey. She has taught me to rebel, I should say. Why, at home I never felt the least bit in the world inclined to disobey. At least," correcting himself, "not half, not a quarter, so often as I have done since I came here. It was a different thing obeying papa and mamma, or grandpapa and grandmamma, from obeying Aunt Jane."

"And that is the very thing that has done you good," Kenneth persisted. "You have been forcing yourself to obey Aunt Jane without a grumble, even when she is most tiresome. And don't you see how that helps you to obey other people who may be tiresome and disagreeable, and who all the same may have a right to command you."

"Oh but I don't see, and I never shall see how anything can make me be sorry to leave Aunt Jane, and her dictatorialness behind, in good old Edinburgh. There she may stay all her life as far as my wishes are concerned. The idea of seeing her cold, grave face, at

dear sunny Birkenholme. Bah," with a grimace. "And she may keep her dear son George to bear her company. I shan't be sorry to be done with him."

"Poor George," Kenneth said, musingly, "I can't make him out. To me he is often quite pleasant. But I know he behaves very ill to you."

"Yes," Hugh said, warmly, "he is so spiteful. You can't think what spiteful, ill-natured tricks he plays me."

"Well, well," Kenneth answered hastily, as if anxious not to hear about these same tricks, "it is better not to speak about them. It is better not to make ourselves angry. Don't you remember papa used always to say that when we had any difficult duty to do, we should try to make it as easy as we could. He says that we have no right to waste the strength God gives us, by making our duties more difficult than He has made them."

"And what duty do you think I am making more difficult now?" Hugh asked, seriously.

"Why, dear Hugh," Kenneth answered, putting his arm affectionately round his shoulder, "don't you know that Christ Jesus has commanded us to forgive our enemies."

Hugh pondered a moment, and then said, with a kind of half smile,—

"I always feel somehow as if that meant a greater, a more noble duty than just not being angry with a spiteful fellow like George. It is but little things he does.

It seems somehow hardly worth thinking about that command for such small things."

"It can't be right to break it in small things, however," Kenneth said, gravely. "George is just the enemy God has given you to forgive, and to bear with; and if there is not anything very grand or noble in forgiving such little things, then all the more you can do it for God's sake, because He bids you."

Hugh acknowledged the truth of Kenneth's words. It was one feature in Hugh's character, which made it more easy to guide him aright, that he was always ready to take God's words to himself, and to strive to act upon them.

Kenneth had not flattered Hugh. He was improved, and improved in the very particular Kenneth had mentioned. He had learnt to set cheerfully and heartily to work at whatever came in his way to do, without pausing to consider whether or not the work was disagreeable. He had learned to feel that it was childish and unmanly to fret about evils he could not prevent, whether that evil might be the provoking temper of a companion, or the tiresomeness and difficulty of a lesson. And still more, had he learned that in one who believed every step of his life was ordered by a Father who loved him, there was both rebellion and ingratitude in being unwilling to take this or that step merely because it did not quite suit his fancy. He had taught himself to obey his aunt's most trying orders without at least rebellious

words, if not without a good many rebellious shrugs and grimaces. He had taught himself to bear the humours of his companions patiently, and sometimes even merrily, and to set himself heartily to work upon every lesson he had to learn, however irksome he might think it.

In their classes, indeed, both brothers were eminently successful. From the beginning, Kenneth's steady industry and intelligent apprehension had left nothing to be desired by his masters. And now that Hugh had added diligence and attention to his natural quickness, he also was giving complete satisfaction.

Towards the beginning of April, however, this prosperous course received a sudden and unexpected check. The younger part of their uncle's family took scarlet fever; and although none of the schoolboys caught the distemper, the fear of their carrying infection to their companions caused them to be debarred from attending the Academy. Had their Uncle John been at home, he would have taken all the four boys to his house; but Aunt Lucy's father was dangerously ill, and she and her husband had gone to England to attend upon him. And, in Charlotte Square, and at their Aunt Grace's, the presence of young people who had not had the complaint, rendered their admission into the family an impossibility. At first there was a proposal of taking lodgings for them; but Aunt Jane, with the fear that they might already have caught the infection, decided that it would be safest to keep them under her own eye.

So a tutor was engaged to carry them on with the same lessons they should have learned at the Academy. He came at half-past eight in the morning, and, after three or four hours spent in study, took them long walks into the country, for it was not only as regarded school that they were shut out from the society of their companions, they were not allowed entrance into the public gardens, where they were accustomed to play, lest they should carry infection to the other children frequenting them; and as they were too small a party to give any spirit to their usual games, so the exercise and amusement they had found in them must be provided in another way.

Mr Calvert, their tutor, was excellently well fitted for his post. Energetic and decided in school hours, he was sociable and pleasant during their walks, encouraging them in every frolic and harmless amusement that could make up to them for the loss of their young companions. They soon learned to like him, and while he was with them they were quite cheerful and contented. But he had other engagements after three o'clock, and during the afternoon and evening they were left to their own resources. They had, it is true, lessons to prepare for the following day, but still many hours were left at their own disposal, and, in their forced isolation, the mode of disposing of them comfortably was by no means easy to find. In the fine spring evenings many a longing glance was directed to the gardens before their

house, from whence arose the merry shouts of their play-fellows, intent upon hounds and hare, prisoners' bars, goosey, or some other equally delectable game; and many a wish was expressed that the little ones would get well, so that they might once more be at liberty to join their friends.

For the sake of Hugh's good humour, it was well that he, and Kenneth through him, had found a new object of interest at the very time when old amusements and occupations were to be taken from them. Thus it happened.

One of the last days he was at the Academy, as he and the three younger cousins were leaving the yards, their attention was caught by the well-known "hollo, hollo," of their school-fellows, proceeding from the small stretch of open road between Brandon Street and Fettes Row. The cousins had intended to go home by the westward streets, in order to convey Hugo so far on his way. But the "Hollo" sounded urgent, and all four at once turned their faces to the east.

They soon came up to the scene of action, where they found their friends in considerable danger. The party of Academicians was particularly small, while that of the town boys was unusually large; and these latter had this further advantage, that they had established themselves upon some heaps of stones left by the stone-breakers, so that they were not only protected in a good measure from the assaults of their adversaries, but had

also an inexhaustible store of offensive weapons ready to their hand, in the stones which formed their fortress.

In spite of every disadvantage, the smaller party presented a bold and undaunted front to the enemy. Once and again they formed themselves into a compact square, rushed upon their foes, scaled the very walls of their fortress, fought nobly to dislodge them, and even when forced by superior numbers to retreat, each boy generally carried a prisoner with him.

The contest was, however, too unequal. The number of prisoners they could thus secure was but a trifle in comparison to the party left behind; and even these few they could not retain, obliged, as they were, to be constantly on the alert to defend themselves against the unceasing shower of stones sent in among them. They began to lay plans of stratagem; and, unwilling as they were even to seem to give in, they decided, that after one more vigorous sally they should feign to retreat up the streets, so as to draw their enemies from their fastness, when they could turn upon them, and renew the combat with better hopes of success. As usual, Hugh was in the front rank; and as his party advanced steadily to the attack, a well-aimed stone grazed his face, giving a pretty severe cut all along the cheek-bone and top of the ear. The pain was so sharp that he involuntarily stopped short. His companions stopped too, a little alarmed at the quick flow of blood. The other party raised a shout of triumph, and the little fellow—for he

was a very little fellow—who had thrown the stone, elated by success, advanced to the very edge of the heap to take good aim at another of the leaders. His ambition misled him; he stood too near the edge, overbalanced himself in the effort of throwing, fell, and rolled into the middle of the road, just as a gentleman's carriage came driving rapidly up to the spot. The boy was stunned by the fall; he did not see his danger, and could not have saved himself if he had. The coachman was looking back at the moment. Another step, and he must have been trampled under the horses' feet, when Hugh sprang forward, and, at considerable risk to himself, seized the reins, and checked the horses so forcibly as to drive them back on their haunches. In doing so he received a smart blow on the shoulder from the pole; but without heeding that, or the dangerous proximity of the prancing horses' hoofs, so soon as he saw that the coachman had regained full command of the reins, he stooped down, raised the boy tenderly in his arms, and drew him out of danger.

Both sides raised a loud hurrah of applause. In schoolboys' code of morals, it is the mark of a poor spirit to bear with, or forgive the petty vexations or teasings of a spiteful companion, like poor George Grahame. But a gallant act of forgiveness, such as Hugh's was, is perfectly to schoolboys' taste. And there was, perhaps, not a boy on either side who, in similar circumstances, would not have done the same

thing if he had possessed that readiness of conception and of action which made Hugh always the first to help in any emergency.

The carriage contained two gentlemen, and one of them took advantage of the stoppage to put his head out of the window, and harangue the young combatants on the impropriety of their behaviour. He naturally addressed his reproofs to the more numerous party, whom he peremptorily ordered to disperse, threatening that if they did not, he, his companion, and servants should interfere to carry the ringleaders up to the police-office. These threats were enforced by the sudden apparition of a policeman coming down Pitt Street; and as the animosity of the fight had at any rate melted away before Hugh's generosity, both sides were willing enough to consent to at least a cessation of hostilities. The larger band slowly descended from their heap of stones, and took their way in groups of twos or threes through the different streets. And the young gentlemen followed their example so soon as they had ascertained that neither their own champion nor his adversary was seriously hurt.

Hugh was in the meantime kindly attending to his little friend "Willie Cawmil," as he called himself. His face was a good deal bruised and scratched, and one knee had got a most painful cut from a sharp stone. The leg of his trousers was torn completely across at this knee; and Hugh was much amused to see that the

injury to the garment was considered the most important of the two.

"I haena anither pair o' breeks in a' the warld," he said, looking up at Hugh with an expression made up of drollery and vexation. "The leg 'ull mend itsel', but wha 'll mend the breeks?"

He was a pretty little fellow, in spite of dirt and bruises. He was perhaps not more than a year or two older than Hugh's little brother, Maurice. He had Maurice's bright blue, laughing eye, and his fair curly hair, and so reminded Hugh of his brother, that his heart was at once drawn to him, and he determined to see him safe home. The cousins wished to dissuade him from going, as they thought his own cut ought to be attended to. But Hugh was obstinate, and they were forced to go home without him. Hugh told Willie he was going to take him to his mother, lest he should find his knee painful when he began to walk.

"Wull ye really, noo? That 's raal gude o' ye. And will ye tell mither it wasna my faut?" Willie asked eagerly, glancing down at the tattered trousers.

"Was it not your fault that I got this?" Hugh asked, laughing, and pointing to his cheek, from which the blood was still flowing a little.

"What can ane do?" the little fellow whimpered in a half-penitent tone, "if ane's freends are fechting, ane maun fecht too, if ane is a man ava."

"Come away then to your mother, you big man,"

was Hugh's amused answer, "and we'll see what can be done."

They had not far to go. Willie led the way to one of the small cross streets in Stockbridge. Here, at the corner of the street, and down an area stair, was a green-grocer's shop. Green-grocer's shops are always in areas, and at the corner of streets. A clean, active-looking woman was at the door, bustling about among baskets and measures to serve a little girl who wanted a half-penny worth of turnips. As their shadows fell across the top of the stair, she looked up, and seeing a young gentleman holding her boy by the hand, she at once, from her knowledge of Willie's propensities, jumped to the conclusion that Hugh had come to complain of him.

"O Willie, ye ill-gaited loon, what-an-a mischief hae ye been about noo?" she cried, in a kind of despair.

Hugh hastened to speak for Willie.

"He has done more mischief to himself than to any one else, Mrs Campbell," he said, in his pleasant voice.

"He has had a fall."

At the word "fall," the kindly mother at once took the place of the thrifty house-provider, and pushing aside her little customer, she hastened up-stairs to ascertain with her own eyes the extent of his injuries. These were more painful to Willie than at all dangerous, and with a relieved heart she was able to observe his tattered garments.

"Eh laddie," she sighed. "was there ever siccan a

misleared callant as ye are? Whar div ye think I'm ever to get ye anither pair o' breeks?"

Willie looked at Hugh with his roguish look, half comic, half penitent. Again Hugh interposed—

"I have a pair of trousers at home," he said, a little embarrassed, for his own Highland pride made him sensitive about wounding the pride of others, and he did not know how far his offer might be acceptable. "They are quite too small for me; and if Aunt Jane allows me, I should like to give them to Willie."

Willie looked up again with a quick, grateful look; and before his mother had time to express her thanks, he said to her in a hurried kind of whisper—

"And it was me did that, mithier," pointing to Hugh's cheek.

"You did, ye little ne'er-do-weel," she answered, giving him a little shake, "and hoo daur ye do onything o' the sort?"

"I didna gang to do it; we were a' fechtin' through ither," he whimpered.

"Come, come, you must not scold him," said Hugh, pleasantly. "Come up to-morrow morning to my uncle's house, before half-past eight, and I'll give you the trousers, if Aunt Jane does not object, and I don't think she will."

"An' wull he ask for Maister Grahame?" the mother asked, after she had got the proper direction.

"No, no, for Hugh M'Leod,"

"M'Leod," she repeated, "no ane o' the M'Leod's o' Glengoile surely?"

"Yes, indeed," he answered, eagerly, "papa was second son of the last Glengoile. Are you a M'Leod?" almost breathless with excitement.

"Na, na, I'm Lowland bred;"—he might have known that from her dialect. "But the gudeman, although he is a Cawmil, comes frae Glengoile. His forbears hae been there for a hundred years an' mair."

"What is his name?" Hugh asked, in the same eager breathless way. To meet a Glengoile man in such a place seemed like a kind of world's wonder. "I knew some Campbells there."

"No him, though, sir. We've been here these ten years. Sandy, puir fallow, was never ane to do muckle for himsel'. Sae whan we married—I foregathered wi' him ae simmer, whan I gaed wast wi' my mistress; ye'll maybe hae heard tell o' her, Mrs Leslie in Moray Place; I was kitchen-maid there, a raal grand leddy she is. But, as I was sayin', whan we married Sandy's freends lookit doon on me because I was a Southron. Sae as Sandy couldna do mickle for himsel', I jist wiled him awa here whaur I had freends to help me. An' my shop has done raal weel. And Sandy does a day's darg whan he can, puir fallow, an' we jist fecht on no that ill. But ye ken five bairns mak' a sair hole i' the bicker; and whan ance the meal kist's empty, it's no that easy to fill again, an' it's that maks me ill at him gangin' and tearin'

his gude claithes, the idle, through-ither, tearin' tyke that he is."

"Is Mr Campbell at home? Can I see him?" Hugh asked.

Poor Sandy had never before been so respectfully spoken of. His wife looked quite pleased.

"Na, he's no at hame the noo," she answered; "he's gotten a day's wark the day, pur fallow. He'll no be hame till sax o'clock."

Hugh said that he should try to come and see him in the evening, and that he should bring Kenneth with him, and the trousers, if Aunt Jane would allow him. Mrs Campbell remonstrated against his having the trouble of bringing the trousers, and wished to send Willie for them. But Hugh judged rightly that Willie would find his knee very stiff and sore for a day or two. And he thought that if his aunt refused to allow him to give away the trousers, the disappointment would be more severe to Willie after a painful walk to get them.

Mrs Grahame, however, did not refuse. It so happened that she knew Mrs Campbell, the green-grocer, by name, and knew she was a deserving woman. So, although she gave Hugh a dignified rebuke for having gone to the house without her permission, she made up for him a little bundle of old clothes from the nursery, which were most gratefully received by Mrs Campbell.

Kenneth was as much delighted as Hugh to see a Glengoile man; and as eager as he was to go that very

evening, which they happily accomplished. They found Sandy exactly what might have been expected from his wife's constantly repeated "puir fallow." He was an honest, easy-tempered man, with certainly no intellect to spare. He was well content with everything. Content to do a day's work when he could get it, and equally content to stay at home when he could not. He was very fond and proud of his wife, and very fond of his five bairns, of whom Willie was the eldest. And he had good reason to be attached to his wife; for she was an excellent wife to him. Not perhaps quite so respectful as might have been wished; but that was only natural, considering the relative position of the parties. In truth, she seemed to look upon him very much as a mother might look upon a favourite, but not very strong child. She was tolerant of all his weakness, careful for his interest, and ever ready to place his comfort before her own. The cosiest seat by the fire was for Sandy, the best cup of tea was his, the most mealy potato sought out for him; and if there was ever a question between a new coat for him, or a new dress for herself, the coat was sure to carry the day. And she was also an excellent mother, quite strict enough, a little rough perhaps, but loving and unselfish with all her gruffness. Amid all her poverty she had contrived to keep Willie at school until the birth of the last baby. Since then, indeed, she had, to use her own phrase, "never been able to get so far before the world," as to gather up the sum required.

And as she could not keep him always in the house, he had got into the company of a set of wild boys, whose example did him no good.

Kenneth and Hugh took a great liking to the little fellow ; and although full of mischief, he was indeed a fine boy—open-hearted, honest, and affectionate. The M'Leods thought that the best thing they could do for him was to get him sent to school ; and by clubbing their small funds together, they found that they could afford to pay for a quarter's schooling at all events. It was well-spent money. Mrs Campbell was not the woman to allow anything to be wasted in her house ; she took good care that Willie should attend regularly, and, amid all her hard work, she never failed to find time to see that his lessons were properly learned.

Hugh obtained his aunt's permission to have Willie for an hour or two on the Sabbath evenings ; and the child always came so clean and neat, that Mrs Grahame allowed Hugh to take him up to his own room, instead of teaching him in the servants' hall, as had been at first proposed, and where the chance of being overheard would have made the task of teaching an unpleasant one to so young a teacher.

All Hugh's spare cash was now carefully laid aside for Willie's benefit ; he hoped to have payment for another quarter ready before the first was done, and he also wished to save enough to buy his little pupil a Testament. He and Kenneth had a small sum of pocket-

money paid them quarterly by their grandfather; but this was generally assigned, before it came due, to the purchase of some long wished-for treasure, or to get birthday or Christmas presents for the numerous brothers and sisters at home. In addition to this quarterly sum, Kenneth, Hugh, and their cousins, like most boys at the Academy, were allowed the large sum of sixpence weekly for the purchase of luncheon, which could be procured at the janitor's lodge, in the form of rolls, buns, biscuits, &c. Many of the boys were in the habit of carrying from their homes slices of bread or biscuits for their luncheon, and so reserving the daily penny for the purchase of some special treat on Saturday, or of bats, balls, marbles, or sweetmeats, as their several tastes might dictate. Hugh very properly looked upon this as a species of cheating, which not even his interest in Willie could induce him to follow. But he thought himself quite at liberty to take the most economical mode of satisfying his hunger, and giving the surplus of his daily penny to Willie's fund. A plain halfpenny roll was found to be as satisfying, though not so good, as the penny bun, rye-roll, or two halfpenny biscuits; and by contenting himself with the cheap article, a clear three-pence a week was gained for his little friend. Then during the six or seven weeks they remained at home, Mr Grahame good-naturedly continued to give the four boys their weekly sixpence, which was, in Hugh's case, all put into Willie's "penny pig," and afforded him the

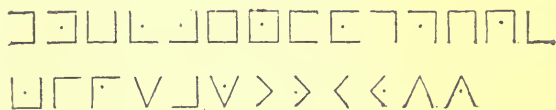
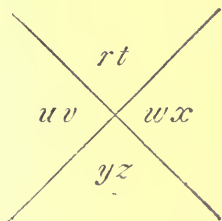
pleasant certainty of being able to keep the boy at school for at least another quarter, as well as to get the much desired Testament.

Another amusement all the boys had during what they called their infected days—this was writing in cipher. It had become quite a rage among Academy boys that season. Their mode of making the cipher was simple enough.

Four straight lines were made to cross each other rectangularly, so as to form nine compartments; two other lines, crossing each other diagonally, to make four more; and in these thirteen compartments the letters of the alphabet were placed, two in each. The first of each two letters was of the simple form of the compartment in which it stood. The second was exactly the same as the first, with the addition of a dot in the middle of it. Of course, if the letters had been arranged according to their place in the alphabet, there could have been but one cipher alphabet; but this would not have been sufficiently like real ciphering to suit the schoolboys' taste. Their cipher must have a key, the knowledge of which should be necessary to the being able to read the cipher, and this key was devised ingeniously enough. A word of six letters was chosen to fill the top line of the larger figure; the other letters of the alphabet being arranged according to their place. By this means, of course, the letters would vary with every variation of the key-word. Let us take, for example,

the word "second." The alphabet would then stand thus, X.

<i>sc</i>	<i>co</i>	<i>nd</i>
<i>ab</i>	<i>fg</i>	<i>hi</i>
<i>jk</i>	<i>lm</i>	<i>pq</i>



Many an hour's amusement did this ciphering afford. Now they were occupied in devising new alphabets, and writing letters to puzzle their friends at school or at Birkenholme, and at other times they were equally well amused in trying to make out the key-word of new ciphers their correspondents sent to them. In inventing new ciphers, the great thing was to make the new key-word as unlike the last as possible. For this purpose, Hugh and his cousins made out an alphabetical list of all the six-letter words they could recollect, such as active, absurd, belfry, bridge, caught, chisel, danger, double, and so on. Then after having taken one word from the beginning, the next would be taken from the end of the list, as after absurd might come wright, after

bridge, urgent, &c.; and the addition of new words to this list formed a new source of amusement to them all.

Such were the alleviations of their isolated state during these same infected days. But there was also one serious evil attendant upon this isolation—this was the increased enmity between George and Hugh. To do Hugh justice, this was far more George's fault than his. Hugh did not forget Kenneth's reminder, that God required him to forgive George; he did not forget to pray daily for strength to keep the command, but in truth he found it hard to do. It had been easy enough to forgive little Willie for the cut on his cheek. Indeed, Hugh would have been indignant had any one spoken of forgiveness being required in this case; but to bear patiently, or to forgive George's constant attempts to vex him, and bring him into trouble, was a much more difficult business. So manifestly spiteful were these attempts of George's, that on several occasions Mr Graham, Percy, Elizabeth, or Mr Calvert, felt called upon to interfere, and to rebuke George sharply for his unprovoked malice; and, with a boy like George, such rebukes only deepened his dislike to Hugh, his wish to do him harm.

Matters were in this state, when one fine Saturday morning, while the family were still at breakfast, Mr Percy was announced. He apologised for his early call. He had arrived the night before, and had only an hour to spare before going out of town again to spend

some days with a friend, who lived a few miles from Edinburgh. His friend, Mr Burnet, had authorised him to invite Kenneth and Hugh to accompany him, and to remain until Monday morning, when Mr Burnet undertook to send them home in time for their lessons. Mr Percy had come to get their uncle's and aunt's permission.

Mr Grahame referred the decision to his wife. She had no objections, she said, if the boys had prepared all their lessons for Monday. For Kenneth's sake, indeed, she was glad of the invitation, as he had been studying too hard lately, and did not look very well.

Both boys eagerly asserted that all their lessons were prepared.

"Is your English theme written out, Hugh?" Mrs Grahame asked. "You know your own carelessness about these things forced me to make the rule, that you should never leave the house on Saturday until it was written."

"Yes, aunt, it is all ready, I assure you. I wrote it last night."

Mrs Grahame observed that when Hugh said this, Edward looked up quickly, as if surprised. He said nothing, however; and Mrs Grahame's attention was turned from the circumstance to ascertain from Mr Percy when and where the boys and their carpet-bag were to join him. Mr Percy was going back to the hotel where he had slept, but he promised to call in Mr

Burnet's carriage for the boys in less than an hour. He took his leave, and the two brothers hastened up to their room to pack up the few things they required to take with them. The careful aunt was following to see that all was right, that a due provision was made for possible occurrences, and that the clean shirts were treated with all proper respect, when her eye fell upon Edward, who still sat in his seat, looking grave and thoughtful; and as his quick glance recurred to her mind, she asked him,

"Edward, why did you look up so quickly when Hugh said that his theme was all ready?"

The boy started, coloured, hesitated.

"Did I look up, mamma?" he asked, evasively, without meeting her eye. "I don't think I did."

"Yes," she said, gravely, "you did. Tell me, Edward, have you any reason to know that Hugh has not written his theme?"

"No, indeed, mamma. I have no reason to know anything about it," he answered, earnestly.

There was an unconscious kind of emphasis on the word "know," which made Mrs Grahame inclined to ask further if he had no reason to suspect anything; but she had too correct a judgment not to feel that it was not fair to make Edward betray his companion, and she said no more to him, but went up to the boys' room, and asked Hugh again, in a very impressive tone, if he were quite sure that he had made the fair copy of his

theme. She happened to know that he had written the scrawl.

“Do not let the desire to go with Mr Percy tempt you to say what is not true,” she said, with more kindness than was usual with her. “At the worst, you could easily walk out to Mr Burnet’s after the theme was written.”

“Nothing in all the world could tempt me to say what was not true,” Hugh said, indignantly. “I tell you I have written it, and I cannot say anything more ; you can believe me or not, just as you please.”

Mrs Grahame did believe him ; she knew he deserved to be believed, for no one had ever heard Hugh say a word that was not true, or that at least he did not believe to be true, since he came to the house ; no one had ever seen him commit an action that was not perfect straightforward ; so she did not, as she had once thought of doing, look into his drawer to make sure for herself that he had not deceived her.

The two brothers set off in high glee, Mr Percy promising that they should be in Queen Street before half-past eight on Monday morning.

It was nearly that hour when a gig drove up to the door ; but the gig contained only Hugh, and the groom who drove him. That Kenneth was not well was naturally the first thought of every one ; but Hugh’s bright, beaming face, when he burst into the dining-room, dispelled every fear. He explained as quickly as his eager-

ness and excitement would allow him, that Kenneth was quite well to-day ; but he had had very bad carache the preceding evening, and as the morning was wet, and an open gig was the only available conveyance, Mrs Burnet would not hear of his coming in that morning.

“ And, Uncle George and Aunt Jane, they want us to stay till Wednesday. They want me to go out again with Uncle Edward, after I have done my day’s lessons. I brought in a message, at least the groom brought in a message, for Uncle Edward to go out to see a sick servant ; and if you don’t wish us to stay—only I hope you may. Please do allow us, Aunt Jane ; but if you don’t, Uncle Edward can bring Kenneth home in his carriage. Please, Uncle George, mayn’t we stay ? Mr Percy is to leave Scotland for good on Thursday, and we may never see him again. Please allow us.”

“ We shall talk about it,” said his aunt, in no very unpromising tone. “ Have you had breakfast ?”

“ Yes, before I came away.”

“ Well, then, run up-stairs, and put out your books to be ready for Mr Calvert, and then come down and we shall tell you what we resolve upon.”

With only a grimace of impatience that his fate could not be at once decided, Hugh did as he was bid. He met George and Edward coming out of the school-room, and stopped them to tell his hopes of pleasure. George only “ humphed ” in a disagreeable, discouraging way ; he did not like that any one should have a pleasure in

which he did not share, and was particularly unwilling that Hugh should be that one. Edward's congratulations were hearty and sincere.

"And Hugh," he said, "I have laid out your books for you all right, lest you should be too late."

"Oh, thank you. And my theme, too?"

"No, I could not find the fair copy, I could only find the pencil one," Edward said, with a peculiar emphasis, and an uneasy look.

Hugh did not observe either emphasis or look.

"Oh, true," he said, "you could not find it; I put it in a queer place."

A queer place enough, truly. It was lying folded into small compass inside his paint-box. Hugh drew it out, opened it, and looked complacently upon its straight, well-written lines. He was exactly one of those boys to whom it seems a kind of impossibility to write neatly. Blots, erasures, crooked lines, words repeated or omitted, always defaced his exercises. Mr Calvert had reproved him several times for this carelessness and untidiness, and on this occasion he had taken particular pains. He was, therefore, much vexed to see, as he refolded the sheet, that there was a stain of dark-blue paint on the outside. He had been painting on Friday afternoon, had with his usual heedlessness put the colours into the box before they were dry, and then, with equal heedlessness, placed his theme above them, wet as they were. Anxious to get rid of this, the only blot which disfigured

his unusually perfect exercise, he so far curbed his impatience to return to the dining-room as to take out his knife and try to scrape off the paint. In his state of excitement, his efforts were not likely to be very judicious, and a hole in the paper soon warned him that he could easily make bad worse. So he placed the theme, the other side uppermost, beside his pile of books, and ran down again to the dining-room.

Here the pleasant smile on his uncle's face was sufficient assurance that all was right. Yes, he might go, unless Mr Calvert had any special reason to complain of to-day's lessons. As Mr Grahame spoke the pleasant words, the door-bell rang.

"There is Mr Calvert," said Mrs Grahame, "so run up to the school-room before he comes in. It is always a proper mark of respect to your tutor to be waiting for him, and I shall come in at the end of the lessons to get his report."

A happy consciousness of well-prepared lessons made this announcement a matter of indifference to Hugh. He ran up-stairs again, whistling gaily as he went, feeling quite sure of his holiday. The two upper floors, where were the bed-rooms and nurseries, were shut off from the rest of the house by a swing-door. In this shut out, or shut in part, was included the school-room, whose door opened just inside the passage-door, at the foot of the upper staircase. As Hugh swung open this passage-door, a long narrow strip of writing-paper flut-

tered down towards him from the upper flat. In the gaiety of his heart, he made a spring at it, and caught it. Without examination, he thrust it into his pocket, intending to make of it certain small paper pellets to be filliped off his forefinger at any companion whose occupation or position might afford a fair opportunity of giving him a start.

There was no one in the school-room when Hugh entered it; but Mr Calvert came in immediately afterwards, followed closely by Edward from the drawing-room, and George from up-stairs. While seats were being taken, and books opened, Hugh had time to tell Mr Calvert how much depended upon this day's lessons, and how anxious he was that there should be no unnecessary delay in getting through all they had to do. Mr Calvert was good-naturedly anxious that Hugh should not, through his own carelessness, prepare disappointment for himself; and Hugh's steady attention through the whole lessons showed that his own anxiety on this subject had taken the only prudent direction. All the lessons were got through with unusual quickness, and on Hugh's part, at least, with faultlessness. Mr Calvert expressed himself much pleased.

"We have now only to look over the theme," he said, "and really, I must say, that after such perfect lessons, I should not be inclined to make an unfavourable report, let the theme be ever so faulty."

Hugh had requested that the examination of the

themes might be the first business of the day ; but as he could give no reason for his request, Mr Calvert, who was rather devoted to regularity, had declined changing the usual order of proceedings. Now Hugh again pressed for an infringement of this order.

“Pray look at my theme first,” he urged. “I do so wish you to correct it before Aunt Jane comes.”

“But, you know, Hugh,” Mr Calvert answered, “smiling, “you all used to be so anxious to have your themes first examined, that I was obliged to make the rule that you should have that privilege in turn, and it is George’s turn to-day.”

“Oh, but just for this once,” Hugh pleaded with increased earnestness, almost rudely pushing his own exercise before the one Mr Calvert was unfolding. “George does not care. Do you, George, for only this once?” imploringly.

“Yes, but indeed I do ; and I don’t see why I should give up my turn to you,” was George’s answer, so disagreeably given that Hugh coloured with quick anger. By a violent effort, he checked the bitter retort that rose to his lips, and saying merely “very well,” in a tone, whose forced quietness contrasted strongly with his previous eagerness, he withdrew his paper.

At this moment, Mrs Grahame entered the room. She seemed really pleased to hear Mr Calvert’s hearty praises of Hugh’s attention and well-prepared lessons.

“I am glad you have not disappointed yourself,

Hugh," she said. "Are the lessons all finished, then? I expect your Uncle Edward every minute to see the little ones in the nursery, and you can go away with him if you are ready."

Mr Calvert explained that the examination of Hugh's theme was the only thing that remained to be attended to, and he held out his hand for it. There seemed now good reason to take his first. But Hugh, so eager before, held back now. George wished to keep his right to be first, he said. But George, too, had changed his mind, and readily declared his willingness to give up his right. Mr Calvert took the theme out of Hugh's hand, and opened it. A shade of displeasure passed over his face as he did so.

"I am not surprised," he said, severely, looking up at Hugh, "that you should be anxious your aunt should not see this disgraceful production. I understand now why you were so unreasonably pertinacious for its early examination at first, so unwilling to produce it now."

In extreme bewilderment, Hugh sprang to Mr Calvert's side, and looked on the open paper. It was his rough pencil copy of the theme.

"Have not I told you more than once," Mr Calvert continued, "that I cannot take such defaced, blurred writing as that? How do you suppose I can find time to make out the meaning of such a manuscript," and he pointed to the page of scrawling, irregular writing, words scored out, and words put in above the line, below the

line, on the margin, at the bottom of the page—anywhere, everywhere.

Hugh could only look at it in silent dismay ; he was roused by his aunt's voice.

"Hugh," she said, in her most severe tone, "I could not have believed that you could have acted thus ; I could not have believed you guilty of such a deliberate falsehood. He has done worse than you suppose," to Mr Calvert, "he was only allowed to go with Mr Percy on Saturday upon his solemn and repeated assurance that his exercise was fairly written."

"And it was fairly written?" Hugh broke in, vehemently. "I said nothing but the truth ; I did write it on Friday evening."

"Where is it now, then?" Mrs Grahame asked, in her cold, incredulous tones.

"I don't know ; I only know that I took it out of my drawer this morning, and laid it beside my books. Some one must have taken it away, and put this one in its place ; I left this in my drawer."

"Who could ? and why should any one do so ?" she asked again.

"I don't know, and I don't care who could, or how they could or should," Hugh said, with increasing indignation, that his word should be doubted. "I only know that I did put it there this morning, and left it there, and you may believe me or not, as you please."

Mr Calvert was a man of quick discernment ; he was

accustomed to read the characters of boys; he had always felt perfect trust in Hugh's honesty and truthfulness. He thought him, in truth, too heedless and blundering to be able to carry on deceit skilfully, even if he had wished it; and he had always remarked, with great pleasure, Hugh's perfect readiness to accuse himself, where truth required he should do so. As he now watched the boy carefully, he felt inclined to believe him. The unstudied flow of Hugh's words, the expression of his face, the very tones of his voice, all spoke to Mr Calvert the absence of any intention to deceive. In a quiet, friendly tone, intended to allay Hugh's irritation, he suggested that the drawer should be examined, that perhaps Hugh might himself have brought out the wrong copy by mistake.

Hugh eagerly caught the hope, and sprang forward to open his drawer; it was in uncommonly good order. One glance showed the theme was not there.

"Ah," said Hugh, looking at Mr Calvert, "I might have known it was not here. I am quite sure it was the right copy I laid out; because, I recollect now, it had a stain of blue paint on the outside, and I took out my knife to scrape it off; and see, there is the knife," and he pointed to it lying open on the table in front of his drawer. His manner was much more collected; as this proof of his accuracy occurred to his mind, he felt more hopeful that his innocence must appear. Proof of accuracy it was not; but so distinctly and clearly related, it

told in his favour, in Mr Calvert's opinion. Hugh was not, he felt, a boy to be able, at such a moment, to invent such an incident. He looked at Mrs Grahame; she answered the look instantly.

"If Hugh placed the right paper on the table, who changed it?" she asked. "Who could change it? He was not two minutes out of the room. Did you leave any one here?" to Hugh.

"No," he said, boldly, even defiantly. He felt a fierce kind of pleasure in showing her that he was not afraid to let his case appear as bad as possible.

"Was there any one here when you returned?"

"No."

"You were not in the room, were you?" to her sons.

George at once answered that he had not been. Edward did not speak till the question was put directly to himself, when he answered, in a very sad, low tone, that he and George had left the room as Hugh came in, and had returned just after Mr Calvert arrived.

"You see," said Mrs Grahame.

"I see nothing, I know nothing, except that I wrote the fair copy of my theme on Friday night, and laid it here this morning, and that it is gone now," Hugh said, doggedly; and turning his back upon the party, he stood leaning against the table, looking steadily out of the window, as if nothing inside the room was worth a thought or a glance.

Mr Calvert suggested that the servants might be questioned. Mrs Grahame rang for the housekeeper.

"Mrs Wright," she said, when that personage appeared, "will you be so good as to ask the servants if any one was in this room between the time of Master Hugh's return home and Mr Calvert's arrival."

Mrs Wright curtsied, and would have withdrawn, but Mr Calvert, in his anxiety to clear Hugh, interposed a word—

"One of the young gentlemen's themes has been meddled with," he said. "If any one has done so for a trick, there is no great harm, if he or she will only be good enough to confess it candidly. It will be cruel to deny it, as by doing so the young gentleman is brought into serious disgrace."

"Very well, sir, I shall do my best to find out the truth," the good woman said, with a compassionate glance at Hugh, whose appearance plainly enough indicated he was the boy in question.

She left the room. A dead silence prevailed. Mrs Grahame looked determinedly convinced that she knew the exact state of the case. Mr Calvert looked anxious, George curious, but less exultant than might have been expected; Edward very uneasy and sad; while Hugh, standing quite still, tried to appear supremely indifferent.

Mrs Wright returned. None of the servants had been in the room since the housemaid had cleaned it out in the morning.

“And indeed, ma’am, indeed, sir, I am sure no one has,” she added; “I know pretty well how people look and speak when they are trying to deceive one. Every one looked quite innocent, quite careless, and, at the same time, wondering like.”

“Very well, Mrs Wright, that will do, thank you,” said Mrs Grahame; and again the housekeeper left the room.

Mrs Grahame turned to Hugh—

“How long do you intend to persist in this falsehood, Hugh?” she asked, in her cold manner. “Remember, that every repetition is a fresh sin, that——,” she was not allowed to conclude. Hugh turned upon her in fierce anger.

“You have no right to say I have told a lie, unless you can prove it,” he said, in a loud clear voice. “You know you wish to find me in the wrong. You are no fit judge.”

“Hush, Hugh,” said Mr Calvert, authoritatively. “This tone does not become you. Look at the case as it stands. You must feel that appearances are against you. Help us to explain them if you can. But speak calmly and respectfully.”

His manner, although stern, was not harsh. It had the effect of quieting Hugh. He answered, though sullenly, that he was ready to tell them anything they wished to know.

“Why were you so anxious your aunt should not see your theme?” Mr Calvert asked, gravely.

"I was not in the least anxious," he answered quickly, and as if surprised.

"Why then press so unreasonably to have it examined before your aunt should come in?"

"Because I knew it was well written, and wished you to tell her so," was the ready answer, so ready that Mr Calvert could not help looking pleased.

"But why then so sudden a change of tone when your aunt came in? Why withdraw the paper so instantaneously?" he continued.

Hugh did not answer. In his pride he could not bear to tell those who doubted his truth, that his sudden change of tone was caused by the effort to overcome his bad feelings against George.

The next question, too, was an unfortunate one. It was asked by Mrs Grahame.

"There is another suspicious circumstance," she said. "Why was the foul copy laid away in the drawer at all, if the fair one was made? Do you generally keep the foul copy of your themes?"

"No," he tried to speak boldly and freely, but he coloured deeply, and when Mrs Grahame repeated the question, why had he kept this one, he did not answer. The truth was, that the foul copy in question was adorned by some caricatures of Mrs Grahame herself. Hugh was particularly clever in drawing caricatures. And these had seemed to him so successful, that he had

carefully preserved the paper, intending to cut them out, and send them to Kate.

Mr Calvert felt disappointed at this suspicious colouring and silence. But he gave Hugh another chance.

"Did no one see you copy the theme?" he asked.

"Yes, to be sure. You did, Edward," Hugh said instantly, his face brightening. Edward's only answer was a most melancholy glance at Hugh. Mrs Grahame observed it, and connected it at once with the marked air of depression which Edward had worn through the whole scene, and with his peculiar manner on Saturday.

"You did *not* see Hugh write it?" she affirmed, rather than asked.

"No, mamma," in a very low tone.

"And you had good reason to suppose he had not written it. What was that reason?"

The question had to be repeated more authoritatively before he replied; then he said, very unwillingly—

"Because he said that he should not write it that night. You know, Hugh," with a deprecatory look towards him, "you said you were determined to finish deciphering Charlie's letter before you touched your theme, and you had not finished the deciphering when we went to bed."

"Ah, yes," Hugh said, readily, "I had forgotten. But I changed my mind after you all left the room, and copied the theme at once."

"Why appeal to Edward if you knew he was out of the room?" Mrs Grahame asked.

"Because I had forgotten that he was," Hugh answered, boldly, meeting her keen suspicious look without shrinking.

Neither boldness nor excuse availed him. Mrs Grahame questioned Edward further, and he was obliged to confess that he had searched Hugh's drawer for the fair copy of his theme, and had found only the scrawl. She turned to Mr Calvert, and said she supposed he must now be convinced of Hugh's guilt. Mr Calvert made no answer, and Mrs Grahame turned again to Hugh.

"You will remain here," she said, "until I have told your uncle what has occurred;" and she left the room.

When she was gone, Mr Calvert made another effort to get at the truth.

"My dear Hugh," he said, earnestly and affectionately, "let me beg of you to give up the useless strife. Tell the whole truth. It is the only way."

"I have never told anything but the truth, sir," was Hugh's lofty answer.

And Mr Calvert was strongly inclined to believe him. As, however, he did not feel justified in expressing such a belief in opposition to Mrs Grahame, he dropped the discussion, and turned to correct George's theme.

In a few minutes Hugh was summoned to his uncle's study. During these few minutes he had been able to review the whole business more fully and calmly. But

the review had only increased his bitter anger, that his word should have been doubted. He went to his uncle's room in a state of proud indignation.

Mr Grahame stood on the hearth-rug, Mrs Grahame beside him. There was an expression of great pain in his face. But this expression Hugh failed to remark. If he had seen it, it might have softened him.

"Hugh," said Mr Grahame slowly, "I am shocked to hear of what you have done. I could not have believed you capable of telling a lie."

"And I have told none," Hugh said, with raised head and flashing eyes. "The only lie that has been told is by those who say I have."

The insolence of his tone and manner did his cause no good. Justly displeased, Mr Grahame gave up his intention of examining him, so that he might have an opportunity of pleading his own cause, and merely reproving him sternly for disrespect, he dismissed him to his own room, ordering him to remain there until permitted to leave it.

Hugh obeyed without a word. As he crossed the hall, he heard his uncle Edward's carriage drive up to the door, and he quickened his pace lest he should meet him.

Mr and Mrs Grahame had also recognised the well-known sound, and Mr Grahame went out and brought his brother into the study.

"Hugh cannot go to Burnet Lodge with you," he

said, gravely ; “ he has behaved very ill, told lies, and tried to deceive us in the most shameful way.”

“ Hugh tell lies ! my dear George, impossible ! It is not in the boy,” Dr Grahame exclaimed, warmly.

Mr Grahame left his wife to tell the story. She repeated exactly what had passed. The facts were perfectly correct, nothing was omitted, nothing added, nothing exaggerated, nothing diminished ; but in Hugh’s absence, without his ready, unstudied, unwavering assertions of his innocence, and without his honest face to plead in his favour, the mere facts had an unfair advantage, and told more against him than was just.

Dr Grahame was much grieved. Hugh was a great favourite with all his uncles.

“ I could not have believed it,” he said ; “ he seemed such a noble-hearted, bold-hearted boy, I could have believed him guilty of any fault rather than lying. I am almost as sorry as if it had been my own son ; and must I tell this story at Burnet Lodge ?”

“ Certainly not,” said Mr Grahame, quickly ; “ say only that Hugh has displeased us greatly, and that we cannot give him the pleasure of accepting their kind invitation. If you see Kenneth alone, he has a right to know the truth, but no one else.”

“ And is Kenneth to remain ?”

“ Oh yes,” said Mrs Grahame ; “ he requires rest and amusement ; and now that he cannot have the society of his school-fellows, he reads too much and works too

hard. The society of the young boys is not sufficient for him, and Percy is too busy to be much with him. I should like him to stay as long as possible."

There was no more to be said, and Dr and Mrs Grahame went up together to see the former's little patients.

Hugh had in the meantime hastened to his own room; there, throwing himself on his face on the bed, he gave free vent to his feelings.

"What a burning shame it is to doubt my word," he cried aloud. "I never told a lie in my life. I have every right to be believed. How I hate them all; and yet," with a sudden change of feeling, "I did so love Uncle George, and it is so pleasant to love; it is so sore and bitter to hate. Oh, why won't people let me love them. And Uncle Edward will hear it all, and I not there to tell him the truth, and he will believe it, and Mr Percy and I shall never see him again, and he will go away believing me a liar. Oh, I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it; it is too hard."

And, in spite of all his efforts, in spite of his manliness, tears forced themselves into his eyes, and ran down his cheeks. He pressed his face harder and harder into the pillow, to stifle the fast rising sobs; but the feeling was too strong for him. Poor fellow! he was nearly worn out with all he had gone through, and with the sudden reaction after the morning's gaiety, he could not regain command of himself. In bitter scorn

of his own weakness, he rose and began to walk hurriedly through the room, exclaiming—

“Why am I such a fool? such a poor baby? Why can't I just never mind?” and he walked faster and faster, as if to walk away from his own emotion.

As he walked, his hands were, boy-like, thrust into his pockets; he felt the long slip of paper he had put there a few hours before. Hardly knowing what he did, he took it out, and examined it. It had evidently been torn from the bottom of a written sheet; for along the torn edge were the remains of letters whose upper parts had been torn off. A peculiar semicircular jag in the middle of this torn edge struck Hugh. He stopped suddenly in his walk, and turned to the other side of the slip.

Yes, there was the stain of blue paint which had been on his lost paper, and the jag must have been part of the hole he had made with his knife. He had not the least doubt it was so. He had remarked that the stain had, at one of its sides, taken the shape of an old woman's bonnet, and there was the bonnet before his eyes.

He felt bewildered, rubbed his forehead, and tried to recollect where or how he had got the slip. In a moment it flashed upon him, and now for the first time he recollected that when he returned up-stairs, after that second visit to the dining-room, as he approached the passage-door, he had heard the door of the school-room

violently slammed, and the sound of a boy's footsteps running quickly up-stairs; and further, he recollected that in looking up to catch the paper, he had caught a glimpse of one of the boys going into their room, which was at the top of the stairs. In a moment all was clear; the flying paper must have dropped from that boy's hands. He it must have been who had done all the mischief, and he must have been George. Edward would never have done Hugh so ill a turn. And, besides, as Hugh now recollected, in coming up from the dining-room, the drawing-room door was standing wide open, and he had seen Edward looking for a book in the bookcase, which stood straight opposite the door. It may seem strange that Hugh had not recollected this sooner; but in truth it was natural enough. He had been at first too much shocked and bewildered, too angry to be able to recall events distinctly, or to reason coolly upon them. That a slip of paper should flutter down the stairs, or that one of the boys should go into his own room, had seemed too unimportant and natural occurrences to excite curiosity, or to make any impression on his mind; but now he felt not the least doubt as to how the whole matter had been done.

"The mean, spiteful creature," he cried aloud; "see if I am not even with you some day; see if I don't pay you back for this."

At this moment, clear and distinct came to his mind the words, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse

you ; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

"Despitefully use you!" repeated poor Hugh, as it glad to seize upon any idea which had least reference to his own duty. "Ay, despitefully indeed. How despitefully he has used me ever since I came to the house, the malicious, ill-natured beast that he is. How I hate him, detestable, cowardly, mean fellow!"

Again, and more clearly, sounded the words, "Love your enemies." Hugh stopped short in his hurried walk.

"How can I?" he cried, aloud, impatiently, even angrily.

His eye fell upon a Bible. He sat down, drew it towards him, opened it, and, with trembling hands, turned to the place, and read, "I say unto you, Love your enemies." "*I* say." Was it his Lord and Saviour who had said it; his Saviour who had so loved him, as to give His life for him, and should he, could he, refuse to obey? He laid down the open Bible, rose, and threw himself in his former posture on the bed.

"Lord Jesus," he cried, in a great tumult of feeling, "I cannot, I cannot do it. Oh, help me, Lord, help me."

For a few moments he could say no more, but quickly the weary aching pain was passing from his heart. He had brought himself, or rather God in His tender love had drawn him into His own gracious presence, and there he found the help and refreshment he required.

Soon he began, in his simple confiding way, to tell His Father in heaven all he felt, all the sorrow and strife of his burdened soul. He was helped by the Lord to cast the whole burden upon Him, and, according to His gracious promise, the Lord sustained him.

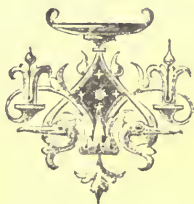
He rose refreshed and comforted, and went back to his Bible. Looking down the page, his eye fell upon the words, "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things," and a gush of tenderness came over him to think how fully his Father knew all his need, and how tenderly and lovingly He supplied his every want. He read on chapter after chapter, and his whole heart rejoiced to read of his Saviour's readiness, while on earth, to help all in distress, and to feel that it was the same Saviour who, now on the right hand of God, had taken charge of him, and watched over him at every moment.

By and by a slight change of feeling occurred. As he turned to look for a passage in the Old Testament, his eye fell upon his own name, written in the beginning by his father, and the painful thought occurred, that his father and mother must hear of the suspicion under which he stood.

"They will never believe one word of it," was his first proud conclusion; but it was succeeded by the bitter reflection, that they might not be able to disbelieve the story, as his aunt would tell it; that they might feel a doubt whether the boy, whom they had left honest and

truthful, might not have been led wrong by bad companions, might not be sadly changed. The thought was too deeply painful; he could not bear to entertain it; he could only return to his old place, to his old employment, and again, with his face buried in the pillows, tell his fears to his ever-loving, ever-listening Father, and ask Him to put the whole matter right, and again his heart found rest and peace.

He lay still for a while thinking of his Saviour's love and care, recalling precious promises, now and then asking this or that thing from his Lord, in the same trusting way in which he would have made his wants known to his earthly father, but oftener still, rendering thanks for all the love which had been poured forth upon him, for all the grounds of confidence which were held out to him, to expect gracious gifts in time to come. By and by his thoughts began to grow confused, he fell asleep. He slept long and soundly. It was quite late in the afternoon when he was aroused by some one gently touching his hand. He started up. It was Kenneth.





CHAPTER XVI.

GOOD OVERCOMING EVIL.

YES, Kenneth had come to him, not as on the memorable day of his confinement in the school-room, to scold and upbraid, but to comfort and help. Not for one instant had he believed the story. But so soon as he had heard it, he had besought his uncle to bring him to town, with so much earnestness, that Dr Grahame had not been able to refuse. During their drive to town, Kenneth had pleaded Hugh's cause with passionate earnestness.

Never in his whole life, he asserted, had Hugh told a lie. He hated deceit of every kind with his whole heart and soul. And to suppose he could be tempted to lie for such a thing as that! Why, even at the worst, had he been obliged to stay to write his theme, it could only have delayed his pleasure for an hour or so. Nothing in all the world could tempt Hugh to deceive, that he well knew. But for anybody to suppose he would run such a risk, to say nothing of the sin, for so small a gain, was sheer absurdity.

His uncle had listened in silence. But Kenneth had reason to hope he had made some impression on him. For, when they parted on the outskirts of the town, where Dr Grahame had some visits to pay, and Kenneth left the carriage, Dr Grahame shook him warmly by the hand, and wished him good speed in clearing Hugh.

“But mark me, Kenneth,” he said, “keep yourself quiet. Don’t go home and rage at your uncle and aunt. See Hugh first. Hear what he has to say, and keep cool, so that your good sense and judgment may have fair play.”

Kenneth thanked his uncle, and took his advice. In virtue of his great steadiness, he was allowed the possession of a pass-key to the front door. He let himself in, and walked quietly up-stairs, without seeing any one. Hugh did not awake; and Kenneth stood looking down, with strong emotion, upon his fair, boyish face, so quiet, and peaceful in sleep. Yes, it was peaceful. Bitterness and anger had gone from his heart before he fell asleep, and in his sleep care and sorrow had gone after them.

“To think you could tell a lie,” Kenneth murmured, and laid his hand gently upon Hugh’s. Hugh awoke, with a start, and sprang up, sitting on the front of the bed. Kenneth put a hand on each of his brother’s shoulders, and looking in his face with a kind, affectionate smile, said cheerfully—

“Well, Sir Hugh, old fellow, what is all this nonsense?” Then with a sudden change of tone he added.

"O Hugh, I'm so glad to find you like this. I thought I should find you savage, raging like a wild beast, ready to tear down everybody."

"Ah, and so I was fierce enough and savage enough," he answered, with his smiling shake of the head. "You don't know, Ken, what horrid companions I had when I first came here, hatred, revenge, every wicked and hateful feeling. But," very earnestly, "God drove them away for me. Kenneth, you can't think what a strange feeling I have," looking earnestly at his brother, and knitting his brows as if he found a difficulty in expressing himself. "Something like a little child who cannot leave hold of its mother's hand, without falling. I feel, if I were to go ever so little a bit away from God's presence, I should get my heart full again of bitterness and wickedness. It seems as if my heart had just to cling to Him as if for bare life."

"And is it not a happy thing to be made to feel that?" Kenneth asked, sitting down beside him on the front of the bed. And there the two brothers sat talking of those things they best loved, of their Father's love and care, of the Spirit's readiness to help and comfort them. For a while, their own peculiar position was forgotten. Then something that Hugh said about the difficulty of forgiving George recalled them to the present scene.

"Why George in particular? I don't understand," Kenneth said.

Hugh showed him the strip of paper, and told him all

about it. Kenneth was, if possible, more angry than Hugh had been.

"The mean blackguard," he cried, "the spiteful, abominable creature! Give me the paper, Hugh; I'll carry it this instant to my uncle and aunt, and show them what a precious scoundrel their own darling son is. Perhaps that may make them more cautious about accusing others again. And yet——," he paused.

Hugh had tried once or twice to interrupt him; he now broke in.

"Ay, Ken, and yet, and yet," he repeated with a smile, "I see you think as I do. I have thought all about telling Uncle George my suspicions, and I see it would not be right. We don't know positively that George has done this, and so it would not be fair to throw suspicion upon him, more especially when we know how sore a thing it is to be suspected."

"You are right, Hugh," Kenneth said, warmly. "But that was not the ending of my 'and yet.' Your thought was more generous than mine."

"But you won't ask me to tell Uncle George what we think," Hugh said, eagerly, "even though you do not quite think as I do. You see, Ken, I think God himself made me see this thing when I asked him to make me forgive George. And you see, so long as I find it hard to forgive George in my heart, I should like to do even more for him than mere duty might require. I should like to serve him well if I could."

"You are quite, quite right, you dear generous old fellow," Kenneth answered. "And you shall do altogether as you like. And, besides, I don't see that telling Uncle George could do much good. That was my 'and yet.' I was going to say I don't see how all this would prove anything, so long as they don't believe your word."

"And that they won't do. That is the hardship," Hugh said, mournfully.

"They might ask," Kenneth pursued, "why you did not tell all this before."

"To be sure, so they might," assented Hugh, "and even dear old Goody's bonnet," surveying the stain with a comic look, "would do no good. They would say it was easy to make out that part of the story afterwards, when I had the piece of paper with me."

They were here interrupted by a knock at the door. Kenneth opened it. It was James, the man-servant, who had knocked. He had brought up Hugh's dinner. He seemed surprised to see Kenneth.

"I don't think my master and mistress know you are here, sir," he said, glancing down upon his tray with its one plate, knife, and fork.

"No, they don't," Kenneth answered. "Hugh, shall I stay and dine with you?"

"No, Ken, go down at once. Perhaps Uncle George may be displeased at your being with me at all, as I am a prisoner, and in disgrace. Thank you, James," and he sprang off the bed, and moved away the books and other

things which lay upon the table, so as to make room for the tray the servant carried. James remarked the ease and cheerfulness of his looks and manner, and thought he looked exceedingly little like one who had deserved to be a prisoner, and in disgrace.

Kenneth found the family at table. He walked straight up to his uncle's chair, and said quite respectfully, but with much self-possession—

“I have been with Hugh for half-an-hour, Uncle George. I hope you will not be displeased. Neither he nor I thought till now of the chance of your not wishing me to go to him.”

His uncle was not more surprised at his sudden appearance than at his manner. For a moment he seemed at a loss how to answer. Then he said quietly, that if Kenneth did not know his wishes, he could not be expected to obey them. And he bade him take his seat, and they could discuss the matter further after dinner.

Kenneth obeyed in silence. It was a singularly silent, uncomfortable meal. Every one wore an air of uneasiness and constraint. Every one except Mrs Grahame. She was always grave and silent, and now not more so than usual. Kenneth did not observe this general silence. He was too busy devising the mode of beginning the defence of Hugh, which he was resolved to take up so soon as the servants had left the room. His aunt unconsciously broke the ice for him.

“We did not expect to see you to-day, Kenneth,”

she said. "We sent you permission to remain until Wednesday."

"Yes, aunt, I know, and I thank you for it," he answered, instantly. "But when I heard about Hugh, I could not stay. I felt I must come at once to help him to clear himself."

"You believe, then, that he can clear himself?" Mr Grahame asked, after a moment's pause.

"Yes, uncle, I never doubted it for an instant," was the decided answer. "Hugh never told a lie in his life. I know he loves truth and hates falsehood with his whole heart, and he has a right to expect that I should believe every word he says."

Mrs Grahame raised her eyebrows, and a slight smile curled her lips, but she did not speak—neither did Mr Grahame; he was the less surprised at Kenneth's tone and line of argument, because Percy had already taken up the same. Percy now came to Kenneth's aid.

"I go further than you do, Kenneth," he said, warmly. "I say that from what we all know of Hugh, he has every right to demand from each and all of us, perfect belief in his word."

"What do we know of him?" Mrs Grahame asked, coldly. "We never even saw him until six months ago."

"And during these six months, how often has he brought himself into trouble by his truthfulness, when by merely holding his tongue he might have been saved

from all blame. You know, sir," turning to his father, as more impressible than his mother, "you yourself have often said that there was something noble in his ready confession of faults which could never have been known except by his confession."

"True, I have often said how correct was my father's description of both boys," with a kindly smile towards Kenneth. "I send you two boys," he wrote, "who have this invaluable quality, that their word is as good as their oath. During the four years I have known them, never once have I seen them try even to hold back, much less to evade the truth. They do not even understand the word concealment, much less deceit."

"And Uncle M'Leod wrote the same thing," Elizabeth said, speaking for the first time. "Hugh, he said, was full of faults, but deceit, or even reserve, was not among them. Every thought of his heart, as well as every action of his life, were always freely told to his father and mother, however wicked they might be."

"And has such a boy no right to challenge belief of his assertion?" Percy asked, in a kind of generous indignation.

"What, then, would you have us do? Forgive Hugh altogether, without any proof in his favour?" Mrs Grahame asked, a little contemptuously. She believed that her son had not considered the result of his own theory, and she meant to embarrass him by proposing this, as she thought, extreme measure.

But she was surprised by his ready answer.

"No, mother," he said, "I would have you believe that there is nothing to forgive. I would have my father call Hugh down-stairs, and say to him, before us all, that considering how unspotted is the reputation for truthfulness which he has made for himself, you both have been convinced that it is only just to believe his word, in spite of all that may seem to be against him."

There was silence for a few minutes, then Mr Grahame looked up at Percy, and said, thoughtfully,

"Supposing the worst, and that Hugh has deceived us?"

"You know, my dear sir, that *I* am perfectly satisfied that he has not; but, even if he had, to a boy of Hugh's temper, such generous confidence would be the surest way of bringing him to confession. And, at any rate, without looking at consequences, I think this is the only just mode of proceeding. In a case like this, there must be the chance of a mistake on one side or other; but surely it is a thousand times better that the mistake should lie to the side of generosity than to the side of injustice."

Mr Grahame rose hastily from the table.

"We are too large a party for such a discussion," he said. "Will you come, my dear," to Mrs Grahame, "into my room. Kenneth, Percy, do you come also."

And the four left the dining-room. Having closed the door of his study, and placed a chair for Mrs

Grahame, Mr Grahame began to walk up and down the room without speaking ; the others remained silent also. Mrs Grahame sat quite still, looking fixedly at the fireplace, with the air of one whose mind was fully made up, and who therefore cared not how the matter might end. Kenneth and Percy stood together watching Mr Grahame. At last he came up to Percy, and said, with some emotion,

“You know only too well, Percy, that I dare not treat my own boys in this manner. If they believe Hugh guilty, may it not be that to acquit him might encourage them to deceive me, when a temptation to it occurs?”

“Even if it were so, my dear sir,” Percy answered, firmly, “I should say we had no right to run the risk of being unjust to Hugh through dread of possible injury to them.”

“No, no ; you are right,” said Mr Grahame.

“But,” Percy continued, “I do not think your conduct in this could injure them ; I think they would rather be led to see the beauty and desirableness of a character for truthfulness, so as they may not have seen it before.”

“And why should our boys be less worthy of trust than Hugh?” Mrs Grahame asked, with more warmth than was usual to her.

“Because of our boys it cannot be said that they never told a lie in their lives,” Mr Grahame said, firmly, but

sadly. "I feel you are right, Percy. I shall see Hugh here, and if, after asking him a few questions, there seems no fresh reason to doubt his word, I shall pronounce his acquittal, as you propose. Kenneth, call Hugh downstairs."

"If you wish Hugh to come to the trial unprepared what to say, you had better choose another messenger," Mrs Grahame said, in her peculiarly disagreeable manner of cold suspicion.

Kenneth's eyes flashed fire, but he bit his lip to keep himself from speaking. Mr Grahame turned hastily to rebuke his wife's inveterate distrust; but recollecting the presence of the young men, he restrained himself, and merely again desired Kenneth to go for Hugh. Kenneth had, however, quietly gone forward to the bell, and rung it.

"Please, uncle, send James," he said, and James was sent.

In a few minutes Hugh came in; he looked a little pale, but the expression of his countenance was peaceful, and his whole bearing was self-possessed, self-respecting, even dignified. He stood waiting for his uncle to speak; but, just as Mr Grahame began, "Hugh," a sudden recollection seemed to come over the boy, and he said eagerly—

"Please, uncle, may I say first how sorry I am for my insolence to Aunt Jane this forenoon. Aunt, I beg your pardon. I hope you will forgive me."

Mrs Grahame made no answer ; but his uncle looked much pleased.

“I am glad you have done this, Hugh,” he said. “It makes my way easier. Your insolence of manner so displeased me this forenoon, that I dismissed you at once without asking questions I had meant to ask. Percy and Kenneth have convinced me that you deserve to have your word believed in spite of all appearances that may be against you. If, therefore, you can look me full in the face, and assure me that you did copy the theme, I shall believe you.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you, Uncle George,” Hugh cried, springing to his side, “I thought it was not right that you should not believe me, and it made it hard for me to love you as I did before. I am so glad to be able to love you with all my heart,” and he spoke with an earnestness which brought the tears to his eyes.

His uncle was much moved. He drew Hugh to him, and putting the hair back from his broad, open brow, and looking down into his clear eyes, he said, affectionately—

“I think it would be hard not to love you, and to believe you too, my boy ;” then, as if suddenly recollecting that he wished to satisfy Mrs Grahame, as well as himself, he added, “But about this strange mystery, Hugh ? Let us try together to get it cleared up. Did any one see you copy the theme ? Did Kenneth not know you had done it ?”

"No, uncle," Hugh said, readily, looking up at him with an open artless expression it would have been difficult to doubt; "the worst of it is that Kenneth had ever so many reasons to think I had not copied it?"

"At first, Hugh, but not afterwards," Kenneth said, in a quiet matter-of-fact way, which told well for the probability of the whole story. There was no over-eagerness to clear Hugh. There was only a confident willingness that the truth should come out just as it might.

"Tell us all you know, Kenneth," said Mr Grahame.

"I teased Hugh on Friday night about copying his theme," Kenneth said, "and was very disagreeably dictatorial about it."

"No, you were not," interrupted Hugh; "you dear, good, old King Ken. But I was abominably cross, and petted, and said I was not going to write it till I chose, and that I was not to be ruled over by you, and twenty other horridly provoking things."

"You said," pursued Kenneth, "you were determined to find the key-word of Charlie's cipher before you touched the theme. So, as I thought I had been provoking enough already, I did not like to ask you if you had done it or not. But I looked at Charlie's note after you had gone up to bed, and from the guessing letters written above and below the cipher, I saw you had not found it out."

"No, I don't know it yet," Hugh interrupted.

"And I felt almost sure the fair copy of the theme had not been made."

"Ah, but I did not do anything more to the cipher after you left. I was so vexed for having been cross to you, that I went and copied the theme at once, and took extra pains to do it well. But I fancy the crossness was not quite gone, for I felt a queer kind of pride or shame, that would not let me tell you I had done it. And I found a kind of fun in making you think I had not."

"You were so merry, though, on Saturday morning, that I began to suspect how it was. And as I did not like to begin about it again after we had quarrelled, I went and looked in his drawer." To Mr Grahame—"It was in extraordinary good order."

"Yes, I know," chuckled Hugh; "that was on purpose to cheat you."

"I saw the foul copy at once," continued Kenneth, "but no fair one."

"Just as Edward said," Mrs Grahame remarked, with an air of satisfaction.

Hugh did not seem to heed her comment, he was waiting with a look of amusement to hear what Kenneth should say next.

"While I was looking in the drawer," Kenneth went on, "Hugh came into the room without my knowing it, and startled me by springing on my back, and laughing at me for a dear, good, inquisitive old magpie."

"But you did not find the theme, magpie as you were," Hugh cried, triumphantly.

"I knew where it was, however."

"Where?"

"In your paint-box."

"Oh I dare say you know now, because I told you up-stairs, when we were talking about the blue paint."

"No, you did not tell me. You forgot to tell me. That is the way you always blunder through stories, forgetting the half. But I knew all the time it was in the paint-box, and so I did not need to ask you where it got the blue paint. Don't you see I must have known, or I should have asked you; I should have been puzzled about it."

"Well, but how did you know? How could you?" Hugh asked, in a somewhat mortified tone.

"Oh, easily enough," he said, laughing. "You are not so clever as you think. I saw that you watched the paint-box most jealously, and whenever I even looked at it, you tried, in a desperate hurry, to draw my attention to something else. I knew it would be in some very queer place, as you wished to cheat me. At first I guessed the paint-box, because it was the queerest place I could think of; and then your watching it so made me sure I was right."

"Well, I must say you are a benevolent old magpie, as well as a clever one," was Hugh's laughing rejoinder,

“not to tell me you had found me out, because you thought it would mortify me.”

Mr Grahame and Percy had allowed the boys to talk on without interruption, in order that the truth might come out, as naturally as possible. And they were perfectly satisfied with the result of the experiment. Certainly they must have been accomplished actors to have been able to carry on deception with so free and natural an air, to have been able to play so skilfully into each other's hands. Mr Grahame looked at his wife to see if she too were not convinced. But she preserved her look of settled incredulity. He turned again to Hugh with a deep sigh ; for this inveterate suspiciousness and distrust were a sore grief to him.

“And you left the foul copy in your drawer,” he said, “and laid the other on the table, and when you returned to the room two minutes later, the papers had been changed, and the right one had disappeared altogether. Now, tell me, Hugh, have you any idea who could have done this?”

For the first time Hugh's colour rose. For the first time his eyes fell before his uncle's. But he looked up again almost immediately, with an expression of earnest entreaty on his face.

“Please, please, uncle,” he said, imploringly, “not to ask me that. I don't know anything, I only suspect. And when I know how hard it is to be suspected, how can I bring suspicion on another. Indeed, uncle, I can

not, I would rather," with a great effort, "go back to my own room, and to disgrace."

"No, no, my boy, you shan't go back to disgrace," said his uncle, putting his arm affectionately round him.

"I am perfectly satisfied as to your truth. You are now to me just what you were before all this occurred. And if you choose to go back to Burnet Lodge to-morrow, I shall write by this night's post to tell them all, that I have found I had been mistaken, and that I had no reason to be offended with you."

Hugh's eyes sparkled with joy. But he looked a little doubtfully at his aunt.

"And you, Aunt Jane?" he asked, with some hesitation.

Mrs Grahame rose from her seat, grave, calm, cold.

"I cannot," she said, with an emphasis on the "cannot," "make myself believe so utterly improbable a story, without proof. But I am perfectly satisfied that your uncle should deal with the matter as he thinks best. And I only hope his great kindness may make you more careful for the future."

"More careful!" Hugh began, in a tone of fiery indignation. But Kenneth laid his hand upon his mouth to stop further words. Neither exclamation nor gesture were unobserved by Mrs Grahame, and she stood still a moment, as if not unwilling to renew the argument. But Hugh had received Kenneth's check in good part, and had walked to the further end of the room to take

himself out of temptation ; and Mr Grahame did not choose to argue or remonstrate with his wife before the young people. She left the room ; and Mr Grahame asked Percy to call the other members of the family, that he might assure them of his belief in Hugh's innocence.

They came in, Elizabeth, the twins, and Hugh's pet, Jane, the only one of the nursery party who was able to go about the house. The announcement of Hugh's acquittal gave satisfaction to all. Jane did not fully understand the business. She only knew that Hugh had been supposed to be naughty, and had been in disgrace, and that he had been found out to be quite good, and was again happy. But that was enough to make her happy too. She ran to him, and when he stooped to kiss her, she flung her arms round his neck, and clung to him, so that he was forced to lift her up in his arms, and suffer her to remain there to kiss him and pull his hair about just as long as she might choose. Elizabeth, usually so cold and undemonstrative, seemed hardly able to find words to express her pleasure, and the perfect conviction of Hugh's truthfulness which she had all along felt. While with Edward's eager congratulations were mixed many apologies for having even for a moment doubted his word.

But George ? Was he satisfied ? Yes he was. In describing the school-room scene, I said that George looked less exulting than might have been expected. I ought to have said that he looked uneasy, for so in truth

he felt. He had done the evil deed in a momentary impulse of irrepressible envy at Hugh's good fortune. He had returned to the school-room immediately after Hugh left it. Hugh's drawer stood open, and the sight of the rubbed-out untidy scrawl had suggested to George the evil thought of getting Hugh into trouble by changing the papers. He had allowed himself no time for thought. The change was effected, and the fair copy torn up in less time than it takes to tell of it. And when he heard Hugh's whistle on the stairs, he darted out of the school-room, and up to his own room, just in time to escape being met and fully recognised.

No sooner was the mischief past repair, than he began to regret what he had done. And through the whole day his conscience had been tormenting him for having injured one who had never wilfully injured him, and his mind had been torn and distracted by questions as to how far he could or should make amends. It was an inexpressible relief to be freed from this remorse, as he hoped to be, now that Hugh was freed from the effects of the evil action. But with this satisfaction was mingled a little of a less selfish feeling. He had not been able to think of Hugh's position in disgrace, without feeling sorry for him, and this compassion had softened his feelings towards him. He was glad to have himself relieved from all necessity of confessing his fault, but he was also almost equally glad to see Hugh once again quite happy. And, in this first awakening of sympathy for Hugh, was

the beginning of a real change of feeling. He was hardly conscious of it, and did not at all understand its cause, but certainly from that day he felt more kindly and friendly towards his cousin.

For some time, however, Hugh reaped little benefit from the change. Such was the perverse pride of George's temper, that he could not bear that Hugh should know his feelings towards him were at all different from what they had always been. And every now and then, when he had been feeling more than usually kind, a sudden fear would seize him that Hugh might look upon this as an acknowledgment that he had formerly behaved ill, and so he would return with renewed vigour to his old teasing ways.

While this was the case, of course Hugh could not have the comfort of knowing that George's feelings towards him had been changed. And it was as difficult as ever to bear with his perverseness, and to feel kindness for him. But although this difficulty was in one way as great as ever, in another it was much lessened. Hugh's power of forgiving was much strengthened. When the one great call for forgiveness had arisen, Hugh had found that the slighter efforts which he had been making for weeks before, had fitted him to meet and obey it. His mind had become accustomed to look upon forgiveness as a duty commanded by the Lord, and he had accustomed himself to seek to perform it at all times. And so in turn, this harder task, with God's

help, well got through, helped and encouraged him to meet the lesser calls of every day. That God's help was necessary he never forgot. Every morning, and often through the day, did he ask for it. And every night his failures in this respect were carefully considered, confessed, and mourned over. And so day by day, it became easier to bear with George, and day by day he realised more fully the preciousness of having God by his side, to give him His Holy Spirit to teach and strengthen him in all duty.

He succeeded the better in this matter, that by Kenneth's advice he did not try for too much. Kenneth told him that it would be in vain to try to feel for George the same kind of love that he felt for Edward and Hugo. He loved them because they loved him, and because they were amiable. Poor George was not amiable, and did not apparently feel anything but dislike for Hugh, so that it was impossible for Hugh to give to him the love he gave to them. But a love of pity and kindness he might and ought to feel. That kind of pity which should make him ready to make allowances for George's temper, ready to understand how sore a burden it was to himself. And that kindness which should make him always willing to do him a service, or to get him pleasure.

When they went back to school in the middle of May, Hugh found many opportunities of showing George this kindness. And often got himself laughed at by his

companions for his constant efforts to propitiate and please so surly a fellow. George was no favourite with any of his school-fellows; and in long walks, or in games where a copartnery was necessary, George might often have been left without an associate, had it not been for Hugh, who provoked his own especial friends by choosing George for his companion instead of them. Nor was it in this alone that Hugh did his provoking enemy good service. Many and many a time did he avert a quarrel, into which George's ill-humour would have carried him, and by well-timed diversion, either drew the attention of George's opponent in some other direction, or carried off George himself, until his ill-humour could be expended. At home, too, Hugh contrived to save him from many a scrape. George had a very obstinate temper, and whenever he chose to fancy any order from his superiors arbitrary or unreasonable, it was the most difficult thing in the world to get him to obey it. Besides, he was self-indulgent to a great degree, and often was in disgrace for disobedience to his father or mother, merely because he would not take the trouble to fulfil their wishes, or because he could not deny himself some present pleasure or amusement in order to execute a commission they had given him, or to keep a rule they had laid down. And on such occasions Hugh's watchful kindness often made him do George's work for him, or by constant solicitations and

reminders, succeed in making George do it for himself in order to get rid of Hugh's importunity.

So matters stood when the King's birthday came round. Of all their occasional holidays this was a special favourite with the schoolboys in the Grahame connexion, because there was always for them some particularly pleasant way of spending the day. Ever since their settling in Edinburgh, the brothers Grahame, with their sister, Mrs Lindsay, had made a kind of family festival of this day. They always spent it together. And when the weather was at all favourable, a day's excursion into the country was their invariable way of commemorating it. Every pretty rural spot near Edinburgh had been visited in turn. One day had been spent at Habbie's Howe, in the heart of the Pentlands; another in the prettiest and wildest nooks among the Dalmahoy Hills. Once or twice they had crossed the firth, and spent the day at Aberdour, Burntisland, or on Inchcolm. Once, by starting very early in the morning, they had gone as far as Tantallon Castle, opposite the Bass Rock. And another year, by giving up part of two days to the trip, they had dined on the grass at the back of the Eildons.

Such distant excursions had, however, been given up long before this. From the year when the eldest of the young fry had been old enough to join the party, year by year had brought such increase of numbers as made

their transportation to any distance a matter of difficulty. And since the boys at school had been anxious to invite companions to share in the pleasures of the day, places within a walking distance had been chosen. Last year they had all dined at Craigmillar Castle. The year before, on one of the pretty grassy slopes of Arthur's Seat. And this year a quiet rural spot between Blackford and the Braid Hill was the scene chosen for the festivity.

The children, with their nurses, their mammas, and indeed, I believe, their lazy papas also, proceeded to the scene of action in carriages; but the boys, of course, all walked, and were honoured to escort the young ladies, Elizabeth Grahame and the three Lindsay girls. They were a large party, for the boys had been allowed to ask a few friends, and had availed themselves of the permission in a most liberal manner. They reached Blackford Hill sometime before the elders, and while the young ladies rested, or wandered about seeking for the prettiest and most convenient dining-room, the boys got rid of a little of the overflow of spirits, in running, leaping, and climbing-matches.

In all such matters, Kenneth and Hugh had long been considered the best in their respective classes; but on this day appeared a new rival to Hugh, in a Willie Beatson, a young stranger who had come to the party, with a cousin in whose house he was living. Beatson was like the M'Leods, country-bred, and far excelled

the town boys in running and climbing. He and Hugh were equally matched. Hugh was perhaps the boldest, and had most spirit, but Beatson had greatly the advantage in length of limb. He was, in truth, a perfect giant for his age. Trial after trial had been made in climbing Blackford, and still it was impossible to say who was best, when the sight of the carriages coming up Blackford avenue suggested to Hugh a new mode of trial which was to be decisive.

The carriages were to be unloaded at the farm-house, where stable-room for the horses had been promised. There was a road round the foot of the hill to within a little distance of their chosen dining-place, but it was in very bad repair. There was little room for the carriages to turn at the end of it, and so altogether it was thought advisable to leave them at the farm. There were plenty of young porters, as Uncle Hugh remarked, to carry the large baskets of provisions, and the walk was by no means too long for even the smallest of the children. Now Hugh's proposition was, that he and Beatson should each take one of the heavy baskets, and see who, thus loaded, could best make his way over the face of the hill. The proposal was received by acclamations from the supporters of both combatants, and both parties were equally confident as to the success of their own champion.

The boys scampered down the hill like a flock of sheep, and up the road, to assist at the bustle of un-

packing the carriages, and carrying off the hampers of provisions. As it happened, however, the coach which contained the greater part of these was a good way behind the others, and the young porters were obliged to wait until it came up. While they were waiting and trying to beguile their impatience by every device of fun or mischief that could occur to them, an unpleasant thought flashed through Hugh's mind. He sought George, and, drawing him aside from his companions, asked him anxiously,

"O George, did you recollect to take that book to Dr Rae?"

George looked exceedingly blank. It was a book which his father had the previous evening desired him to take to a friend in George Square. George had been too much amused with games in the Queen Street gardens to execute the commission, and his father had that morning expressed much displeasure at his omission, and had peremptorily ordered him to take it in the course of that day. George now confessed that he had wholly forgotten it.

"Oh, oh," cried Hugh, in consternation; "what shall you do? You should go now, George, indeed you should."

"Go now, and miss the fun of the dinner! I'd see myself far enough," he said, impatiently. "Oh, it can wait. I'll run over with it at night after we come home."

"But, George, you can't," Hugh urged; "you know

we are to spend the evening with Sir John M'Kenzie, and he has got fireworks for us, and we shan't be home till very late. Aunt Jane would never allow you to go over to George Square then."

"Well, then, it must wait till to-morrow," doggedly.

"But oh, George, what will uncle say? He was displeased enough this morning. What will it be if you disobey him again?"

George did not choose to think what it would be, neither did he choose to have his present enjoyment disturbed. He silenced Hugh's remonstrances and kind offers to go back with him, by angry reminders that it was no business of his—that it was not with him Mr Grahame would be angry, and at last broke from him, and ran back to his friends, with the complimentary assurance that Hugh was the greatest bore in existence.

Hugh naturally felt angry at this ungrateful return for his kind solicitude, and indignantly resolved to leave George to manage for himself as he best could. But this feeling did not last long. He had often longed for an opportunity of doing George really good service, and had even, in his own artless way, prayed to God to give him such an opportunity.

"And now," he thought, "that God has put it in my way, He will be displeased if I refuse to take it up. I'll go to town for George and take the book."

It was a considerable sacrifice. To a boy like Hugh there was a peculiar attraction in the bustle and gaiety

of a dinner in the open air, and this he must lose if he returned to town. And, besides, there was his trial with Beatson, and the chance, or even certainty, that it would be said he feared the result, and had avoided the contest. But he would not allow himself to think ; he thought he ought to go, and go he would. He only waited to seek some one to explain his absence to his uncle and aunt. Kenneth was not there ; he had remained on the hill with Percy to botanise. But Hugh found Hugo, and asked him to say that he had been obliged to go to town to do something which ought to have been done before, and should be back as soon as he could. He did not explain the business, for he knew there was no love between George and Hugo, and he feared the latter might be tempted to betray George's secret, neither would he listen to Hugo's remonstrances, but darted off down the avenue, while the others were too busy round the newly arrived coach to observe his departure.

He was gone about an hour. When he joined the party, there was every sign of its having been a merry one. But the merriment of dinner at least was over. He had missed all the fun of laying the cloth, of carrying water from the burn, of preparing seats for the elders, and of all the amusing mischances that always happen in such scenes. Now the dining-place was deserted—the older people had withdrawn from the relics of the feast to enjoy the beauty of the day, in some quieter corner.

The children were running up and down the braes, and the boys were scattered through the wood, or trying leaping-matches over the burn. A solitary, uncomfortable dinner was poor Hugh's. Nor was this the only evil. It had never occurred to him that his uncle and aunt might be displeased at his absenting himself without permission or explanation, and he was unpleasantly startled at the grave looks with which he was received, and at the difficulty of answering, with perfect truth, his uncle's questions as to the cause of his absence.

"I had to go back to do something I should—which had been forgotten—which should have been done sooner," he stammered. "I am sorry—I did not know you could be displeased."

"Unless you have a good reason to give," his uncle answered, gravely, "I certainly am displeased. To absent yourself in this manner was disrespectful to the uncles and aunts who kindly invited you to join their party, and I expect a sufficient reason for your doing so to be distinctly stated. Mystery is a thing I cannot bear."

Hugh was fairly puzzled. He did not think that anything could justify his betraying George. He really had not had any right to interfere in the matter, and ought to have left George to manage as he thought best. But now that he had interfered, it seemed absolutely impera-

tive upon him to keep the secret. He stood silent, embarrassed, his eye fixed on the ground, his uncle waiting an answer. At last Hugh looked up again with his own honest, straightforward look.

"I am sorry I went without asking leave," he said, frankly; "I never thought of asking anybody's leave but my own. For you know it was hard enough to go away from the fun. But I thought I ought, and even though I may have been wrong in that, yet I hope you will be satisfied when I assure you that it was to do nothing wrong that I went, and that I can't tell you the secret, because it is not my own."

And his uncle was satisfied with that truthful look and manner, and said he should let the matter drop. And so that difficulty was over. But then came the indignation of his own partisans for his desertion, and the triumphs and jeers of the other side over his supposed want of pluck. And sore work he had to keep his temper among them all. After all the storm had blown over, however, there was a glad feeling at his heart, that he had saved his old enemy from sore disgrace, and had softened his perverse heart. For George's heart was softened that he could see. At the first quiet opportunity he had whispered to him what he had done, and had told him that if his father asked whether the book had been taken, he had only to answer that Hugh had done it for him, and all would be right. And George's

look of surprise and gratitude had been to Hugh a full reward for all his trouble.

After some hours spent on the hill, the party dispersed. The ladies and children returned to their carriages, the gentlemen and boys took a charming walk by the road across the Braid Hills, and into Newington by Liberton Tower. At Newington there was another separation. The Grahames, M'Leods, and Lindsays were engaged to spend the evening with a gentleman, a friend of old Mr Grahame's, while the other boys went to their several homes.

A happy evening our young friends had, and a splendid show of fireworks made a brilliant ending to a happy day. It was nearly eleven o'clock before they reached home, and very glad George was that he had not the burden of his forgotten message upon his mind.

Another burden was there, however, and one which he soon found he could not bear. The contrast between his conduct and Hugh's; the thought of his own malice against Hugh, and Hugh's unvarying kindness to him, lay like a heavy weight upon his heart. He tossed and tumbled about long after Edward was asleep, and even when he did get to sleep, he was tormented with dreams in which Hugh was constantly risking his life to save him, and he, George, was as constantly trying to put Hugh into danger. When he awoke in the morning,

earlier than usual, the feeling of oppression was still there. He could bear it no longer, but rose, dressed himself, and went to seek Hugh.

Hugh and Kenneth were reading the Bible together when George opened the door, and only putting his head in, asked Hugh to come to speak to him. Hugh went out at once. George carefully pulled to the door after him, and looked all round to make sure no one heard.

"Hugh," he said, "I only wanted to tell you it was so good of you to do that for me yesterday. I have always been so unkind to you. And oh, Hugh, you don't know what a thing I did to you."

"Yes, yes, I do," Hugh interrupted, generously eager to save him the humiliation of confession. "But that is all over now. Never mind that now. Only, George, I am so glad that you are sorry."

"But you don't know, you can't know, the abominable thing I mean," George persisted.

"Yes, George ; you mean that you destroyed my good theme, and put the other in its place."

George looked at Hugh in bewildered astonishment.

"How did you know?" was all he could say.

Hugh told him.

"And you knew it all along. You have known it all this time, and never told, and did not hate me, and were

always so ready to serve me. O Hugh!" and the proud boy fairly burst into tears.

"It made me happy, though, George," said Hugh, his tears ready to keep George's company. "It is so pleasant to serve people. You must not think too much of that."

"But can I do nothing for you, Hugh?" George said, drying away the tears, as if ashamed of them. "Should you like?—oh yes, you must like it. I'll go and tell papa all about the themes."

Hugh's eyes sparkled with joy. He knew that to this day his aunt retained her distrust of him, and it would be such happiness to have his character quite cleared. But he looked at George, pale, and trembling at the very thought of going through so humiliating a scene, and, with all his ready generosity, he exclaimed—

"No, no; you mustn't do it, George. It would be too hard to do. At least not for my sake," hesitating a little. "But if you could—if you would do it because it would be right. O George, you don't know how happy it would make you."

"I'd rather do it to please you, Hugh."

"That is because you have not tried to please God, and you don't know what a happy thing it is," Hugh said, eagerly. "And oh, George, if you want to do better, this would be such a grand big step on the way. It would help you so much." /

George looked at Hugh's face, so full of affectionate solicitude, and again his eyes filled with tears, to think how little he had deserved it.

"I'll do it, Hugh," he said, and ran down-stairs.

Before he reached the bottom, Hugh was after him, and had caught hold of him.

"George," he said, in a low earnest tone, "I know it is very hard. Will you ask God to help you? He will help you, oh, so much, if you will only ask Him."

"But, Hugh," said George, in a breathless tone, which showed how much he dreaded the scene, "if papa is not down-stairs? If I have long to wait."

"Then just keep praying to God all the time, George. And Kenneth and I will pray too," was the affectionate answer. And the boys parted.

Kenneth and Hugh did pray earnestly to God to help their erring companion, and then they sat still, listening for his return up-stairs. It seemed a long time. But at last the peculiar sound of the swing door was heard. Hugh ran out into the passage. George was coming up-stairs. There were marks of tears on his cheeks, and he looked agitated, as he came quickly up, with his eyes cast down. Hugh drew back a little, and did not speak, lest the proud boy might be unwilling to continue the confidence so lately begun. But George looked up, saw him, and holding out his hand to him, drew him, without speaking, into an empty room near the top of the

stairs. He closed the door, and set his back against it, as if very jealous of any one but Hugh seeing him so much agitated.

“O Hugh!” he cried, after a moment’s silence, “papa was so good—so very good;” and the tears rose again at the recollection. “And I am so glad I told him all. He was dreadfully shocked, but said he was thankful I had come and told him. And he said such things of you, Hugh;” and this time there was no envy in the look he cast on Hugh. “He said that you and Kenneth had brought a blessing to the house; and indeed I am sure you have.”

“And he forgave you?” Hugh asked.

“Yes; and he undertook to tell mamma, and to get her to forgive me too. And I could not help crying, he was so good. And I am so glad I told. Indeed, Hugh, you can hardly know what a help it will be to me to do better, from having told you. I was always afraid to do right, or kind things to you, lest it might make you think I was ashamed of having done wrong. Oh, I am so glad that you have been so good. If you had been the least bit less good, I was so bad that I should just have gone on as I was, and never done better. But now that I have got out so much to you, that I never could have said to any one else, I am sure I shall get on better.”

And George was right. The breaking through the proud reserve of his temper was the best thing that

could have happened to him. Now that he had once confessed that he had been wrong, he was not ashamed to show his sense of it, by trying to do Hugh every service he could. And the happiness he felt in entertaining and exercising kind feelings, softened him more and more, and made him more sensible of the evil of his naturally bad temper. He and Hugh were good friends from this time; and the great openness of Hugh's temper made him, perhaps, the best and most helpful friend George could have had.

And now, having removed this one great stumbling-block in the way of Hugh's happiness in his uncle's house, I think we must bid our schoolboys a kind farewell. My readers must have much less imagination than I give them credit for, if they cannot picture for themselves the joy of the meeting at Birkenholme on the commencement of the holidays. It was a joy all the more perfect, that the young M'Leods had by that time a good hope that they should not be again separated. Colonel M'Leod had accomplished the good he had been sent to India to effect, and he and his wife expected to return to Scotland before it was time for the boys to go back to school. And as the girls had never yet had the benefit of masters in any branch of their education, it was proposed that the whole family should be in Edinburgh for the winter months, so that Hugh's old wish for the pleasures of the Academy in school-time, and the

pleasures of home at other times, was likely to be realised.

I ought, perhaps, to mention, that George and Edward, as well as Hugo, went to Birkenholme for the holidays. And it would have been difficult to tell which were happiest, the boys in the new enjoyments of a thoroughly country life, or the good, kind grandpapa and grandmamma, in having so many of their grandchildren with them, in hearing their merry voices through the house, and seeing their perfect enjoyment of all the simple pleasures provided for them.



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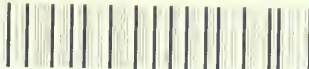
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